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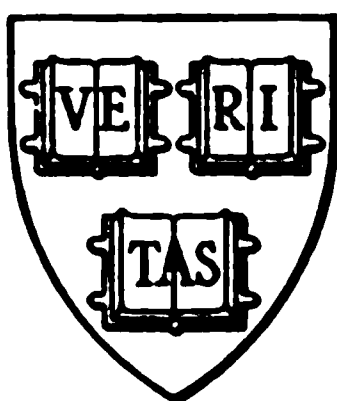
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FROM

The Family of

Charles Eliot Norton

Nov. 16, 1927

ADVERTISEMENT.

The volume of Mrs. Hemans's Poems now published contains about eighty pages more than were promised in the Proposals. It is believed that no handsomer or more correct reprint of any foreign author has appeared in our country. Its price, at the same time, is less, in proportion to its size, than the prices at which Mrs. Hemans's publications, printed in a style not superior, are sold in London.

The shorter miscellaneous poems have not appeared before in any volume of her works. They were furnished by the author at different times. Their number was, at last, found to be such, as to make it necessary to omit the selection proposed from her former volumes. Her two tragedies are, probably, as little known in this country, as any of her writings; not admitting of being circulated in the various ways, through which so many of the finest of her smaller poems have been given to the public.

“The Forest Sanctuary” is in the press, and, it is hoped, will be published in a few weeks; in the same style of

printing as the present volume. A double titlepage has been given with this volume, as the first of her works. If a sufficient number of her writings should be published by the editor uniformly with the present, to make a second, or a third volume, of the same size, a corresponding titlepage will be given, for the convenience of those who may procure a complete set. Those who possess a single volume only, can easily cancel the added title.

Mrs. Hemans is now engaged in preparing another volume, to be entitled "Records of Woman." Many of the poems, of which it will be composed, have already appeared separately in the *New Monthly Magazine*, and have been reprinted in this country. None of them, of course, are contained in the present collection. Whenever the volume may appear, it is the intention of the present editor immediately to republish it. All republications by him are under the direction, and for the benefit of the author; who has done him the honor to accept the offer of his services.

The publication of this volume has been retarded by difficulty and delay in procuring the means for executing it in the manner desired. No similar delay, it is believed, will take place in regard to "The Forest Sanctuary."

It only remains for the editor to avail himself of this opportunity to express the great pleasure which he has felt in the interest taken in the republication of Mrs. Hemans's

writings; and his sincere thanks for the very friendly and gratifying exertions, which have been made to promote the subscription for this volume. A. N.

The words of "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers" have been set to music by Miss Browne, sister of Mrs. Hemans. The music, which has not before been printed, will, in a few days, be published by Mr. S. H. Parker, Washington street, Boston.

Mrs Stearns

*with Mr Norton's
best regards.*

P O E M S

BY MRS. HEMANS.

VOL. I.

THE
LEAGUE OF THE ALPS,
THE
SIEGE OF VALENCIA,
THE
VESPERS OF PALERMO,
AND
OTHER POEMS.

BY MRS. FELICIA HEMANS.

BOSTON :
HILLIARD, GRAY, LITTLE, AND WILKINS.

1826.

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THE LEAGUE OF THE ALPS,

OR

THE MEETING ON THE FIELD OF GRÜTLI.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It was in the year 1308, that the Swiss rose against the tyranny of the Bailiffs appointed over them by Albert of Austria. The field called the Grütli, at the foot of the Seelisberg, and near the boundaries of Uri and Unterwalden, was fixed upon by three spirited yeomen, Walter Fürst (the father-in-law of William Tell), Werner Stauffacher, and Erni (or Arnold) Melchthal, as their place of meeting, to deliberate on the accomplishment of their projects.

“Hither came Fürst and Melchthal, along secret paths over the heights, and Stauffacher in his boat across the Lake of the Four Cantons. On the night preceding the 11th of November, 1307, they met here, each with ten associates, men of approved worth; and while at this solemn hour they were wrapt in the contemplation that on their success depended the fate of their whole posterity, Werner, Walter, and Arnold held up their hands to heaven, and in the name of the Almighty, who has created man to an inalienable degree of freedom, swore jointly and strenuously to defend that freedom. The thirty associates

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heard the oath with awe ; and with uplifted hands attested the same God, and all his saints, that they were firmly bent on offering up their lives for the defence of their injured liberty. They then calmly agreed on their future proceedings, and for the present, each returned to his hamlet.”—*Planta's History of the Helvetic Confederacy*.

On the first day of the year 1308, they succeeded in throwing off the Austrian yoke, and “it is well attested,” says the same author, “that not one drop of blood was shed on this memorable occasion, nor had one proprietor to lament the loss of a claim, a privilege, or an inch of land. The Swiss met on the succeeding sabbath, and once more confirmed by oath their ancient, and (as they fondly named it) their perpetual league.”

THE

LEAGUE OF THE ALPS.

I.

'Twas night upon the Alps.—The Senn's¹ wild horn,
Like a wind's voice, had pour'd its last long tone,
Whose pealing echoes, through the larch-woods borne,
To the low cabins of the glens made known
That welcome steps were nigh. The flocks had gone,
By cliff and pine-bridge, to their place of rest ;
The chamois slumber'd, for the chase was done ;
His cavern-bed of moss the hunter prest,
And the rock-eagle couch'd, high on his cloudy nest.

II.

Did the land sleep?—the woodman's axe had ceas'd
Its ringing notes upon the beech and plane ;
The grapes were gathered in ; the vintage-feast
Was clos'd upon the hills, the reaper's strain
Hushed by the streams ; the year was in its wane,
The night in its mid-watch ; it was a time
E'en marked and hallowed unto Slumber's reign.
But thoughts were stirring, restless and sublime,
And o'er his white Alps mov'd the Spirit of the clime.

III.

For there, where snows, in crowning glory spread,
High and unmark'd by mortal footstep lay ;
And there, where torrents, 'midst the ice-caves fed,
Burst in their joy of light and sound away ;
And there, where Freedom, as in scornful play,
Had hung man's dwellings 'midst the realms of air,
O'er cliffs, the very birth-place of the day—
Oh ! who would dream that Tyranny could dare
To lay her withering hand on God's bright works e'en
there ?

IV.

Yet thus it was—amidst the fleet streams gushing
To bring down rainbows o'er their sparry cell,
And the glad heights, through mist and tempest rushing
Up where the sun's red fire-glance earliest fell,
And the fresh pastures, where the herd's sweet bell
Recall'd such life as Eastern patriarchs led ;—
There peasant-men their free thoughts might not tell
Save in the hour of shadows and of dread,
And hollow sounds that wake to Guilt's dull, stealthy tread.

V.

But in a land of happy shepherd-homes,
On its green hills in quiet joy reclining
With their bright hearth-fires, 'midst the twilight-glooms,
From bowery lattice through the fir-woods shining ;
A land of legends and wild songs, entwining
Their memory with all memories lov'd and blest—
In such a land there dwells a power, combining
The strength of many a calm, but fearless breast ;
—And woe to him who breaks the sabbath of its rest !

VI.

A sound went up—the wave's dark sleep was broken—
On Uri's lake was heard a midnight oar—
Of man's brief course a troubled moment's token
Th' eternal waters to their barriers bore ;
And then their gloom a flashing image wore
Of torch-fires streaming out o'er crag and wood,
And the wild falcon's wing was heard to soar
In startled haste—and by that moonlight-flood,
A band of patriot men on Grüthi's verdure stood.

VII.

They stood in arms—the wolf-spear and the bow
Had wag'd their war on things of mountain-race ;
Might not their swift stroke reach a mail-clad foe ?
—Strong hands in harvest, daring feet in chase,
True hearts in fight, were gather'd on that place
Of secret council.—Not for fame or spoil
So met those men in Heaven's majestic face ;—
To guard free hearths they rose, the sons of toil,
The hunter of the rocks, the tiller of the soil.

VIII.

O'er their low pastoral valleys might the tide
Of years have flow'd, and still, from sire to son,
Their names and records on the green earth died,
As cottage-lamps, expiring, one by one,
In the dim glades, when midnight hath begun
To hush all sound.—But silent on its height,
The snow-mass, full of death, while ages run
Their course, may slumber, bath'd in rosy light,
Till some rash voice or step disturb its brooding might.

IX.

So were *they* roused—th' invading step had past
Their cabin-thresholds, and the lowly door,
Which well had stood against the Föhnwind's^a blast,
Could bar Oppression from their homes no more.
—Why, what had *she* to do where all things wore
Wild Grandeur's impress?—In the storm's free way,
How dared *she* lift her pageant crest before
Th' enduring and magnificent array
Of sovereign Alps, that wing'd their eagles with the day?

X.

This might not long be borne—the tameless hills
Have voices from the cave and cataract swelling,
Fraught with His name, whose awful presence fills
Their deep lone places, and forever telling
That He hath made man free!—and they whose
dwelling
Was in those ancient fastnesses, gave ear ;
The weight of sufferance from their hearts repelling,
They rose—the forester, the mountaineer—
Oh ! what hath earth more strong than the good peasant-
spear ?

XI.

Sacred be Grütli's field !—their vigil keeping
Through many a blue and starry summer-night,
There, while the sons of happier lands were sleeping,
Had those brave Switzers met ; and in the sight
Of the just God, who pours forth burning might
To gird the oppress'd, had given their deep thoughts
way,
And brac'd their spirits for the patriot-fight,
With lovely images of homes, that lay
Bower'd 'midst the rustling pines, or by the torrent-spray.

XII.

Now had endurance reach'd its bounds !—They came
With courage set in each bright earnest eye,
The day, the signal, and the hour to name,
When they should gather on their hills to die,
Or shake the Glaciers with their joyous cry
For the land's freedom.—'Twas a scene, combining
All glory in itself—the solemn sky,
The stars, the waves their soften'd light enshrining,
And Man's high soul supreme o'er mighty Nature shining.

XIII.

Calmly they stood, and with collected mien,
Breathing their souls in voices firm but low,
As if the spirit of the hour and scene,
With the wood's whisper, and the wave's sweet flow,
Had temper'd in their thoughtful hearts the glow
Of all indignant feeling. To the breath
Of Dorian flute, and lyre-note soft and slow,
E'en thus, of old, the Spartan from its sheath
Drew his devoted sword, and girt himself for death.

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XVIII.

But who was he, that on his hunting-spear
Lean'd with a prouder and more fiery bearing ?
—His was a brow for tyrant-hearts to fear,
Within the shadow of its dark locks wearing
That which they may not tame—a soul declaring
War against earth's oppressors.—'Midst that throng,
Of other mould he seem'd, and loftier daring,
One whose blood swept high impulses along,
One that should pass, and leave a name for warlike song,

XIX.

A memory on the mountains !—one to stand,
When the hills echoed with the deepening swell
Of hostile trumpets, foremost for the land,
And in some rock-defile, or savage dell,
Array her peasant-children to repel
Th' invader, sending arrows for his chains !
Ay, one to fold around him, as he fell,
Her banner with a smile—for through his veins
The joy of danger flow'd, as torrents to the plains.

XX.

There was at times a wildness in the light
Of his quick-flashing eye ; a something, born
Of the free Alps, and beautifully bright,
And proud, and tameless, laughing Fear to scorn !
It well might be !—Young Erni's^s step had worn
The mantling snows on their most regal steeps,
And track'd the lynx above the clouds of morn,
And follow'd where the flying chamois leaps
Across the dark-blue rifts, th' unfathom'd glacier-deeps.

XXI.

He was a creature of the Alpine sky,
A being, whose bright spirit had been fed
'Midst the crown'd heights with joy and liberty,
And thoughts of power.—He knew each path which led
To the rock's treasure-caves, whose crystals shed
Soft light o'er secret fountains.—At the tone
Of his loud horn, the Lämmer-Geyer^e had spread
A startled wing ; for oft that peal had blown.
Where the free cataract's voice was wont to sound alone.

XXII.

His step had track'd the waste, his soul had stirr'd
The ancient solitudes—his voice had told
Of wrongs to call down Heaven.⁷—That tale was heard
In Hasli's dales, and where the shepherds fold
Their flocks in dark ravine and craggy hold
On the bleak Oberland ; and where the light
Of Day's last footstep bathes in burning gold
Great Righi's cliffs ; and where Mount Pilate's height
Casts o'er his glassy lake the darkness of his might.

XXIII.

Nor was it heard in vain.—There all things press
High thoughts on man.—The fearless hunter pass'd,
And, from the bosom of the wilderness,
There leapt a spirit and a power to cast
The weight of bondage down—and bright and fast,
As the clear waters, joyously and free,
Burst from the desert-rock, it rush'd, at last,
Through the far valleys ; till the patriot-three
Thus with their brethren stood, beside the Forest Sea.⁸

XXIV.

They link'd their hands,—they pledg'd their stainless
faith,
In the dread presence of attesting Heaven—
They bound their hearts to suffering and to death,
With the severe and solemn transport given
To bless such vows.—How man had striven,
How man *might* strive, and vainly strive, they knew,
And call'd upon their God, whose arm had riven
The crest of many a tyrant, since He blew
The foaming sea-wave on, and Egypt's might o'erthrew.

XXV.

They knelt, and rose in strength.—The valleys lay
Still in their dimness, but the peaks which darted
Into the bright mid-air, had caught from day
A flush of fire, when those true Switzers parted,
Each to his glen or forest, stedfast-hearted,
And full of hope. Not many suns had worn
Their setting glory, ere from slumber started
Ten thousand voices, of the mountains born—
So far was heard the blast of Freedom's echoing horn!

XXVI.

The ice-vaults trembled, when that peal came rending
The frozen stillness which around them hung ;
From cliff to cliff the avalanche descending,
Gave answer, till the sky's blue hollows rung ;
And the flame-signals through the midnight sprung,
From the Surennen rocks like banners streaming
To the far Seelisberg ; whence light was flung
On Grütli's field, till all the red lake gleaming
Shone out, a meteor-heaven in its wild splendor seeming.

XXVII.

And the winds toss'd each summit's blazing crest,
As a host's plumage ; and the giant pines,
Fell'd where they wav'd o'er crag and eagle's nest,
Heap'd up the flames. The clouds grew fiery signs,
As o'er a city's burning towers and shrines
Reddening the distance. Wine-cups, crown'd and
bright,
In Werner's dwelling flow'd ; through leafless vines
From Walter's hearth stream'd forth the festive light,
And Erni's blind old sire gave thanks to Heaven that night.

XXVIII.

Then, on the silence of the snows there lay
A Sabbath's quiet sunshine,—and its bell
Fill'd the hush'd air awhile, with lonely sway ;
For the stream's voice was chain'd by Winter's spell,
The deep wood-sounds had ceas'd.—But rock and dell
Rung forth, ere long, when strains of jubilee
Peal'd from the mountain-churches, with a swell
Of praise to Him who stills the raging sea,—
For now the strife was clos'd, the glorious Alps were free !

NOTES.

Note 1.

—————*The Senn's wild horn.*

SENN, the name given to a herdsman among the Swiss Alps.

Note 2.

—————*Against the Föhnwind's blast.*

Föhnwind, the South-east wind, which frequently lays waste the country before it.

Note 3.

—————*A father of the land.*

Walter Fürst, the father-in-law of Tell.

Note 4.

Werner, the brave and true ! &c.

Werner Stauffacher, who had been urged by his wife to rouse and unite his countrymen for the deliverance of Switzerland.

Note 5.

————— *Young Erni's step had worn, &c.*

Erni, Arnold Melchthal.

Note 6.

————— *The Lämmer-Geyer had spread, &c.*

The Lämmer-Geyer, the largest kind of Alpine eagle.

Note 7.

Of wrongs to call down Heaven, &c.

The eyes of his aged father had been put out, by the orders of the Austrian Governor.

Note 8.

————— *Beside the Forest-Sea.*

Forest-Sea. The Lake of the Four Cantons is frequently so called.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

THE breaking waves dash'd high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods, against a stormy sky,
Their giant branches tost ;

And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moor'd their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted came,
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame ;

Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear,—
They shook the depths of the desert's gloom,
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea !
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free !

The ocean-eagle soar'd
From his nest by the white wave's foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roar'd—
This was their welcome home !

There were men with hoary hair,
Amidst that pilgrim-band—
Why had they come to wither there
Away from their childhood's land ?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth ;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar ?
Bright jewels of the mine ?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war ?
—They sought a faith's pure shrine !

Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod !
They have left unstain'd what there they found—
Freedom to worship God !

[These glorious verses will find an echo in the breast of every true descendant of the Pilgrims ; and give the name of their authoress a place in many hearts. She has laid our community under a common obligation of gratitude. Every one must feel the sublimity and poetical truth, with which she has conceived the scene presented, and the inspiration of that deep and holy strain of sentiment, which sounds forth like the pealing of an organ. Ed.]

THE HEBREW MOTHER.

THE rose was in rich bloom on Sharon's plain,
 When a young mother with her first-born thence
 Went up to Zion, for the boy was vow'd
 Unto the Temple-service ;—by the hand
 She led him, and her silent soul, the while,
 Oft as the dewy laughter of his eye
 Met her sweet serious glance, rejoic'd to think
 That aught so pure, so beautiful, was hers,
 To bring before her God. So pass'd they on,
 O'er Judah's hills ; and wheresoe'er the leaves
 Of the broad sycamore made sounds at noon,
 Like lulling rain-drops, or the olive-boughs,
 With their cool dimness, cross'd the sultry blue
 Of Syria's heaven, she paus'd, that he might rest ;
 Yet from her own meek eyelids chas'd the sleep
 That weigh'd their dark fringe down, to sit and watch
 The crimson deepening o'er his cheek's repose,
 As at a red flower's heart.—And where a fount
 Lay like a twilight-star 'midst palmy shades,

Making its banks green gems along the wild,
There too she linger'd, from the diamond wave
Drawing bright water for his rosy lips,
And softly parting clusters of jet curls
To bathe his brow. At last the Fane was reach'd,
The Earth's One Sanctuary—and rapture hush'd
Her bosom, as before her, through the day,
It rose, a mountain of white marble, steep'd
In light, like floating gold. But when that hour
Wan'd to the farewell moment, when the boy
Lifted, through rainbow-gleaming tears, his eye
Beseechingly to hers, and half in fear
Turn'd from the white-rob'd priest, and round her
arm

Clung as the ivy clings—the deep spring-tide
Of Nature then swell'd high, and o'er her child
Bending, her soul broke forth, in mingled sounds
Of weeping and sad song.—“Alas,” she cried,

“Alas ! my boy, thy gentle grasp is on me,
The bright tears quiver in thy pleading eyes,
And now fond thoughts arise,
And silver cords again to earth have won me ;
And like a vine thou claspest my full heart—
How shall I hence depart ?

“ How the lone paths retrace where thou wert playing
So late, along the mountains, at my side ?

And I, in joyous pride,
By every place of flowers my course delaying
Wove, e'en as pearls, the lilies round thy hair,
Beholding thee so fair !

“ And oh ! the home whence thy bright smile hath
parted,

Will it not seem as if the sunny day
Turn'd from its door away ?
While through its chambers wandering, weary-hearted,
I languish for thy voice, which past me still
Went like a singing rill ?

“ Under the palm-trees thou no more shalt meet me,
When from the fount at evening I return,
With the full water-urn ;
Nor will thy sleep's low dove-like breathings greet me,
As 'midst the silence of the stars I wake,
And watch for thy dear sake.

“ And thou, will slumber's dewy cloud fall round thee,
Without thy mother's hand to smooth thy bed ?
Wilt thou not vainly spread

Thine arms, when darkness as a veil hath wound thee,
To fold my neck, and lift up, in thy fear,
A cry which none shall hear ?

“ What have I said, my child ?—Will He not hear thee,
Who the young ravens heareth from their nest ?
Shall He not guard thy rest,
And, in the hush of holy midnight near thee,
Breathe o’er thy soul, and fill its dreams with joy ?
Thou shalt sleep soft, my boy !

“ I give thee to thy God—the God that gave thee,
A wellspring of deep gladness to my heart !
And precious as thou art,
And pure as dew of Hermon, He shall have thee,
My own, my beautiful, my undefil’d !
And thou shalt be His child.

“ Therefore, farewell !—I go, my soul may fail me,
As the hart panteth for the water-brooks,
Yearning for thy sweet looks—
But thou, my first-born, droop not, nor bewail me ;
Thou in the Shadow of the Rock shalt dwell,
The Rock of Strength.—Farewell !”

THE CHILD AND DOVE.

SUGGESTED BY CHANTREY'S STATUE OF LADY LOUISA RUSSELL.

THOU art a thing on our dreams to rise,
 'Midst the echoes of long-lost melodies,
 And to fling bright dew from the morning back,
 Fair form ! on each image of childhood's track.

Thou art a thing to recall the hours,
 When the love of our souls was on leaves and flowers,
 When a world was our own in some dim sweet grove,
 And treasure untold in one captive dove.

Are they gone? can we think it, while *thou* art there,
 Thou joyous child with the clustering hair?
 Is it not Spring that indeed breathes free
 And fresh o'er each thought, while we gaze on thee?

No ! never more may we smile as *thou*
Sheddest round smiles from thy sunny brow ;
Yet something it is, in our hearts to shrine
A memory of beauty undimm'd as thine.

To have met the joy of thy speaking face,
To have felt the spell of thy breezy grace,
To have linger'd before thee, and turn'd, and borne
One vision away of the cloudless morn.

THE CHILD'S LAST SLEEP.

ON A MONUMENT BY CHANTREY FOR AN INFANT DAUGHTER OF
SIR THOMAS ACKLAND.

THOU sleepest—but when wilt thou wake, fair child ?
—When the fawn awakes 'midst the forest wild ?
When the lark's wing mounts with the breeze of morn,
When the first rich breath of the rose is born ?
—Lovely thou sleepest, yet something lies
Too deep and still on thy soft-seal'd eyes ;
Mournful, though sweet, is thy rest to see—
When will the hour of thy rising be ?

Not when the fawn wakes, not when the lark
On the crimson cloud of the morn floats dark—
Grief with vain passionate tears hath wet
The hair, shedding gleams from thy pale brow yet ;
Love with sad kisses unfelt hath prest
Thy meek dropt eyelids and quiet breast ;

And the glad Spring, calling out bird and bee,
Shall color all blossoms, fair child, but thee.

Thou'rt gone from us, bright one—that thou shouldst die,
And life be left to the butterfly ! *

Thou'rt gone, as a dew-drop is swept from the bough,
—Oh ! for the world where thy home is now !

How may we love but in doubt and fear,
How may we anchor our fond hearts here,
How should e'en Joy but a trembler be,
Beautiful dust ! when we look on thee ?

* A butterfly, as if fluttering on a flower, is sculptured on the monument.

THE LADY OF THE CASTLE.

FROM "THE PORTRAIT GALLERY," AN UNFINISHED POEM.

THOU seest her pictur'd with her shining hair,
 (Fam'd were its tresses in Provençal song,)
 Half braided, half o'er cheek and bosom fair
 Let loose, and pouring sunny waves along
 Her gorgeous vest.—A child's light hand is roving
 'Midst the rich curls, and oh ! how meekly loving
 Its earnest looks are lifted to the face,
 Which bends to meet its lip in laughing grace.—
 Yet that bright lady's eye methinks hath less
 Of deep, and still, and pensive tenderness,
 Than might beseem a mother's—on her brow
 Something too much there sits of native scorn,
 And her smile kindles with a conscious glow,
 As from the thought of sovereign beauty born.
 —These may be dreams—but how shall woman tell

Of woman's shame, and not with tears ?—she fell !
That mother left that child—went hurrying by
Its cradle—haply, not without a sigh—
Haply one moment o'er its rest serene
She hung—but no ! it could not thus have been,
For she went on !—forsook her home, her hearth,
All pure affection, all sweet household mirth,
To live a gaudy and dishonor'd thing,
Sharing in guilt the splendors of a king.


Her lord, in very weariness of life,
Girt on his sword for scenes of distant strife ;
He reck'd no more of glory—grief and shame
Crush'd out his fiery nature, and his name
Died silently.—A shadow o'er his halls
Crept year by year ; the minstrel pass'd their walls,
The warder's horn hung mute ;—meantime the child
On whose first flowering thoughts no parent smil'd,
A gentle girl, and yet deep-hearted, grew
Into sad youth ; for well, too well she knew
Her mother's tale !—Its memory made the sky
Seem all too joyous for her shrinking eye ;
Check'd on her lip the flow of song, which fain
Would there have linger'd ; flush'd her cheek to pain,
If met by sudden glance ; and gave a tone

Of sorrow, as for something lovely gone,
Ev'n to the Spring's glad voice.—Her own was low,
And plaintive—oh ! there lie such depths of woe
In a *young* blighted spirit.—Manhood rears
A haughty brow, and Age has done with tears,
But Youth bows down to misery, in amaze
At the dark cloud o'ermantling its fresh days ;
And thus it was with her.—A mournful sight
In one so fair ; for she indeed was fair—
Not with her mother's dazzling eyes of light,
Hers were more shadowy, full of thought and prayer,
And with long lashes o'er a white-rose cheek
Drooping in gloom, yet tender still, and meek,
Still that fond child's—and oh ! the brow above,
So pale and pure ! so form'd for holy love
To gaze upon in silence !—but she felt
That love was not for her, though hearts would melt
Where'er she mov'd, and reverence mutely given
Went with her ; and low prayers, that call'd on Heaven
To bless the young Isaure.—

One sunny morn,
With alms before her castle gate she stood,
'Midst peasant-groups ; when breathless and o'erworn,
And shrouded in long weeds of widowhood,

A stranger through them broke—the orphan maid
With her sweet voice, and proffer'd hand of aid,
Turn'd to give welcome ; but a wild sad look
Met hers ; a gaze that all her spirit shook ;
And that pale woman, suddenly subdued
By some strong passion in its gushing mood,
Knelt at her feet, and bath'd them with such tears
As rain the hoarded agonies of years
From the heart's urn—and with her white lips prest
The ground they trod—then, burying in her vest
Her brow's deep flush, sobb'd out, “ Oh ! undefiled !
I am thy mother !—spurn me not, my child ! ”

Isaure had pray'd for that lost mother—wept
O'er her stain'd memory, when the happy slept,
In the hush'd midnight ; stood with mournful gaze
Before yon picture's smile of other days ;
But never breath'd in human ear the name
Which weigh'd her being to the earth with shame.
What marvel if the anguish of surprise,
The dark remembrances, the alter'd guise,
Awhile o'erpower'd her ?—from the weeper's touch
She shrank—'twas but a moment—yet too much
For that all humbled one—its mortal stroke
Came down like lightning's, and her full heart broke



At once in silence.—Heavily and prone
She sank, while, o'er her castle's threshold-stone,
Those long fair tresses—they still brightly wore
Their early pride, though bound with pearls no more—
Bursting their fillet, in sad beauty roll'd,
And swept the dust with coils of wavy gold.

Her child bent o'er her—call'd her—'twas too late !
Dead lay the wanderer at her own proud gate.—
The joy of courts, the star of knight and bard—
How didst thou fall, oh ! bright-hair'd Ermengarde !

TO THE IVY.

OCCASIONED BY RECEIVING A LEAF GATHERED IN THE
CASTLE OF RHEINFELS.

OH ! how could Fancy crown with thee,
In ancient days, the god of wine,
And bid thee at the banquet be,
Companion of the vine ?
Thy home, wild plant, is where each sound
Of revelry hath long been o'er ;
Where song's full notes once peal'd around,
But now are heard no more.

The Roman, on his battle plains,
Where kings before his eagles bent,
Entwin'd thee, with exulting strains,
Around the victor's tent ;
Yet there though, fresh in glossy green,
Triumphantly thy boughs might wave,—
Better thou lov'st the silent scene,
Around the victor's grave.

Where sleep the sons of ages flown,
The bards and heroes of the past,
Where, through the halls of glory gone,
Murmurs the wintry blast ;
Where years are hastening to efface
Each record of the grand and fair—
Thou in thy solitary grace,
Wreath of the tomb ! art there.

Oh ! many a temple, once sublime,
Beneath a blue, Italian sky,
Hath nought of beauty left by time,
Save thy wild tapestry.
And, rear'd 'midst crags and clouds, 'tis thine
To wave where banners wav'd of yore,
O'er towers that crest the noble Rhine,
Along his rocky shore.

High from the fields of air, look down
Those eyries of a vanish'd race,
Homes of the mighty, whose renown
Hath pass'd and left no trace.
But thou art there—thy foliage bright,
Unchang'd, the mountain-storm can brave—
Thou that wilt climb the loftiest height,
And deck the humblest grave.

The breathing forms of Parian stone,
That rise round Grandeur's marble halls;
The vivid hues by painting thrown
Rich o'er the glowing walls;
Th' acanthus on Corinthian fanes,
In sculptur'd beauty waving fair,—
These perish all—and what remains?—
Thou, thou alone art there.

'Tis still the same—where'er we tread,
The wrecks of human power we see,
The marvels of all ages fled,
Left to Decay and thee.
And still let man his fabrics rear,
August in beauty, grace, and strength—
Days pass, thou "Ivy never sere," *
And all is thine at length.

* "Ye myrtles brown, and ivy never sere."

Lycidas.

ON A LEAF FROM THE TOMB OF VIRGIL.

AND was thy home, pale wither'd thing,
Beneath the rich blue southern sky ?
Wert thou a nurseling of the Spring,
The winds, and suns of glorious Italy ?

Those suns in golden light, e'en now,
Look o'er the Poet's lovely grave,
Those winds are breathing soft, but thou
Answering their whisper, there no more shalt wave.

The flowers o'er Posilippo's brow,
May cluster in their purple bloom,
But on th' o'ershadowing ilex-bough,
Thy breezy place is void, by Virgil's tomb.

Thy place is void—oh ! none on earth,
This crowded earth, may so remain,
Save that which souls of loftiest birth
Leave when they part, their brighter home to gain.

ON A LEAF FROM THE TOMB OF VIRGIL. 45

Another leaf ere now hath sprung,
On the green stem which once was thine—
When shall another strain be sung
Like his whose dust hath made that spot a shrine?

**FOR A DESIGN OF A BUTTERFLY RESTING
ON A SKULL.**

CREATURE of air and light,
Emblem of that which may not fade or die,
 Wilt thou not speed thy flight,
To chase the south-wind through the glowing sky ?
 What lures thee thus to stay,
 With Silence and Decay,
Fix'd on the wreck of cold Mortality ?

The thoughts once chamber'd there,
 Have gather'd up their treasures, and are gone—
 Will the dust tell us where
 They that have burst the prison-house are flown ?
 Rise, nursling of the day,
 If thou wouldst trace their way—
 Earth hath no voice to make the secret known.

A BUTTERFLY RESTING ON A SKULL. 47

Who seeks the vanish'd bird
By the forsaken nest and broken shell?—
Far thence he sings unheard,
Yet free and joyous in the woods to dwell.
Thou of the sunshine born,
Take the bright wings of morn !
Thy hope calls heaven-ward from yon ruin'd cell.

THE LOST PLEIAD.

“ Like the lost Pleiad seen no more below.”

Byron.

AND is there glory from the heavens departed ?
 —Oh ! void unmark'd !—thy sisters of the sky
 Still hold their place on high,
 Though from its rank thine orb so long hath started,
 Thou, that no more art seen of mortal eye.

Hath the night lost a gem, the regal night ?
 She wears her crown of old magnificence,
 Though thou art exil'd thence—
 No desert seems to part those urns of light,
 'Midst the far depths of purple gloom intense.

They rise in joy, the starry myriads burning—
 The shepherd greets them on his mountains free ;
 And from the silvery sea
 To them the sailor's wakeful eye is turning—
 Unchang'd they rise, they have not mourn'd for thee.

Couldst thou be shaken from thy radiant place
Ev'n as a dew-drop from the myrtle spray,
Swept by the wind away ?

Wert thou not peopled by some glorious race,
And was there power to smite them with decay ?

Why, who shall talk of thrones, of sceptres riven ?
—Bow'd be our hearts to think of what *we* are,
When from its height afar

A world sinks thus—and yon majestic heaven
Shines not the less for that one vanish'd star !

THE SLEEPER ON MARATHON.

I LAY upon the solemn plain
 And by the funeral mound,
 Where those who died not there in vain,
 Their place of sleep had found.
 'Twas silent where the free blood gush'd,
 When Persia came array'd—
 So many a voice had there been hush'd,
 So many a footstep stay'd.

I slumber'd on the lonely spot,
 So sanctified by Death—
 I slumber'd—but my rest was not
 As theirs who lay beneath.
 For on my dreams, that shadowy hour,
 They rose—the chainless dead—
 All arm'd they sprang, in joy, in power,
 Up from their grassy bed.

I saw their spears, on that red field,
Flash as in time gone by—
Chas'd to the seas, without his shield
I saw the Persian fly.
I woke—the sudden trumpet's blast
Call'd to another fight—
From visions of our glorious past,
Who doth not wake in might?

TROUBADOUR SONG.

THE warrior cross'd the ocean's foam,
For the stormy fields of war—
The maid was left in a smiling home,
And a sunny land afar.

His voice was heard where javelin showers
Pour'd on the steel-clad line ;
Her step was 'midst the summer-flowers,
Her seat beneath the vine.

His shield was cleft, his lance was riven,
And the red blood stain'd his crest ;
While she—the gentlest wind of heaven
Might scarcely fan her breast.

Yet a thousand arrows pass'd him by,
And again he cross'd the seas ;
But she had died, as roses die,
That perish with a breeze.

As roses die, when the blast is come,
For all things bright and fair—
There was death within the smiling home,
How had death found her there ?

•

THE TRUMPET.

THE trumpet's voice hath rous'd the land,
 Light up the beacon-pyre!
 —A hundred hills have seen the brand
 And wav'd the sign of fire.
 A hundred banners to the breeze
 Their gorgeous folds have cast—
 And hark!—was that the sound of seas?
 —A king to war went past.

The chief is arming in his hall,
 The peasant by his hearth;
 The mourner hears the thrilling call,
 And rises from the earth.
 The mother on her first-born son,
 Looks with a boding eye—
They come not back, though all be won,
 Whose young hearts leap so high.

The bard hath ceas'd his song, and bound
The falchion to his side ;
E'en for the marriage altar crown'd,
The lover quits his bride.
And all this haste, and change, and fear,
By *earthly* clarion spread !—
How will it be when kingdoms hear
The blast that wakes the dead ?

BERNARDO DEL CARPIO.

The celebrated Spanish champion, Bernardo del Carpio, having made many ineffectual efforts to procure the release of his father, the Count Saldana, who had been imprisoned by King Alfonso of Asturias, almost from the time of Bernardo's birth, at last took up arms in despair. The war which he maintained proved so destructive, that the men of the land gathered round the king, and united in demanding Saldana's liberty. Alfonso accordingly offered Bernardo immediate possession of his father's person, in exchange for his castle of Carpio. Bernardo, without hesitation, gave up his strong hold with all his captives, and being assured that his father was then on his way from prison, rode forth with the king to meet him. "And when he saw his father approaching, he exclaimed," says the ancient chronicle, "'Oh! God, is the Count of Saldana indeed coming?'" 'Look where he is,' replied the cruel king, 'and now go and greet him whom you have so long desired to see.'"—The remainder of the story will be found related in the ballad. The chronicles and romances leave us nearly in the dark, as to Bernardo's future history after this event.

THE warrior bow'd his crested head, and tam'd his heart
of fire,
And sued the haughty king to free his long-imprison'd
sire :

“ I bring thee here my fortress-keys, I bring my captive
train,
I pledge thee faith, my liege, my lord !—oh ! break my
father’s chain ! ”

“ Rise, rise ! ev’n now thy father comes, a ransom’d man
this day ;
Mount thy good horse, and thou and I will meet him on
his way.”—
Then lightly rose that loyal son, and bounded on his
steed,
And urg’d, as if with lance in rest, the charger’s foamy
speed.

And lo ! from far, as on they press’d, there came a glit-
tering band,
With one that ’midst them stately rode, as a leader in the
land ;
—“ Now haste, Bernardo, haste ! for there, in very truth,
is he,
The father whom thy faithful heart hath yearn’d so long
to see.”

His dark eye flash'd,—his proud breast heav'd,—his
cheek's hue came and went,—

He reach'd that grey-hair'd chieftain's side, and there
dismounting bent,

A lowly knee to earth he bent, his father's hand he
took—

What was there in its touch that all his fiery spirit
shook?—

That hand was cold—a frozen thing—it dropp'd from his
like lead—

He look'd up to the face above,—the face was of the
dead—

A plume wav'd o'er the noble brow—the brow was fix'd
and white—

He met at last his father's eyes—but in them was no
sight!

Up from the ground he sprang and gaz'd—but who could
paint that gaze?

They hush'd their very hearts that saw its horror and
amaze—

They might have chain'd him as before that stony form
he stood,
For the power was stricken from his arm, and from his
lip the blood.

“Father!” at length he murmur'd low—and wept like
childhood then—

Talk not of grief till thou hast seen the tears of warlike
men!—

He thought on all his glorious hopes, and all his young
renown—

He flung his falchion from his side, and in the dust sat
down.

Then covering with his steel-glov'd hands his darkly
mournful brow,

“No more, there is no more,” he said, “to lift the sword
for now—

My king is false, my hope betray'd, my father—oh! the
worth,

The glory, and the loveliness are pass'd away from
earth.

“ I thought to stand where banners wav’d, my sire ! beside
thee yet—

I would that there our kindred blood on Spain’s free soil
had met—

Thou wouldst have known my spirit then—for thee my
fields were won,

And thou hast perish’d in thy chains, as though thou hadst
no son ! ”

.

Then starting from the ground once more, he seiz’d the
monarch’s rein,

Amidst the pale and wilder’d looks of all the courtier-
train ;

And with a fierce o’ermastering grasp the rearing war-
horse led,

And sternly set them face to face—the king before the
dead—

“ Came I not forth upon thy pledge, my father’s hand to
kiss ?

—Be still, and gaze thou on, false king ! and tell me what
is this ?

The voice, the glance, the heart I sought—give answer,
where are they ?
—If thou wouldst clear thy perjur'd soul, send life through
this cold clay.

“Into these glassy eyes put light—be still ! keep down thine
ire—

Bid these white lips a blessing speak—this earth is not my
sire—

Give me back him for whom I strove, for whom my blood
was shed—

Thou canst not ?—and a king !—his dust be mountains on
thy head !”

He loos'd the steed,—his slack hand fell—upon the silent
face

He cast one long, deep, troubled look, then turn'd from
that sad place—

His hope was crush'd, his after-fate untold in martial
strain—

His banner led the spears no more amidst the hills of
Spain.

THE DYING BARD'S PROPHECY.

AT THE TIME OF THE SUPPOSED MASSACRE BY EDWARD I.

THE Hall of Harps is lone this night,
 And cold the chieftain's hearth ;
 It hath no mead, it hath no light,
 No voice of melody, no sound of mirth.

And I depart—my wound is deep,
 My brethren long have died—
 Yet, ere my soul grow dark with sleep,
 Winds ! bear the spoiler one more tone of pride.

Bear it, where on his battle-plain,
 Beneath the setting sun,
 He counts my country's noble slain—
 Say to him—Saxon ! think not *all* is won.

Thou hast laid low the warrior's head,
The minstrel's chainless hand ;
Dreamer ! that numberest with the dead
The burning spirit of the mountain-land.

Think'st thou, because the song hath ceas'd,
The *soul* of song is flown ?
Think'st thou it woke to crown the feast,
It liv'd beside the ruddy hearth alone ?

No ! by our names and by our blood,
We leave it pure and free—
Though hush'd awhile, that sounding flood
Shall roll in joy through ages yet to be.

We leave it, 'midst our country's woe,
The birthright of her breast—
We leave it, as we leave the snow,
Bright and eternal, on Eryri's* crest.

We leave it, with our fame to dwell,
Upon our children's breath—

* Eryri, the Welsh name for Snowdon.

Our voice in theirs through time shall swell—
The bard hath gifts of prophecy from death.

He dies—but yet the mountains stand,
Yet sweeps the torrent's tide,
And this is yet Aneurin's* land—
Winds! bear the spoiler one more tone of pride.

* Aneurin, a celebrated ancient British bard.

THE WRECK.

ALL night the booming minute-gun
 Had peal'd along the deep,
 And mournfully the rising sun
 Look'd o'er the tide-worn steep.
 A bark from India's coral strand,
 Before the raging blast,
 Had vail'd her topsails to the sand,
 And bow'd her noble mast.

The queenly ship !—brave hearts had striven,
 And true ones died with her—
 We saw her mighty cable riven,
 Like floating gossamer.
 We saw her proud flag struck that morn,
 A star once o'er the seas—
 Her anchor gone, her deck uptorn,
 And sadder things than these.

We saw her treasures cast away—
The rocks with pearls were sown,
And strangely sad, the ruby's ray
Flash'd out o'er fretted stone.
And gold was strewn the wet sands o'er,
Like ashes by a breeze—
And gorgeous robes—but oh ! that shore
Had sadder things than these !

We saw the strong man still and low,
A crush'd reed thrown aside—
Yet by that rigid lip and brow,
Not without strife he died.
And near him on the sea-weed lay—
Till then we had not wept,
But well our gushing hearts might say,
That there *a mother* slept !

For her pale arms a babe had prest,
With such a wreathing grasp,
Billows had dash'd o'er that fond breast,
Yet not undone the clasp.
Her very tresses had been flung
To wrap the fair child's form,
Where still their wet long streamers clung,
All tangled by the storm.

And beautiful 'midst that wild scene,
Gleam'd up the boy's dead face,
Like Slumber's, trustingly serene,
In melancholy grace.

Deep in her bosom lay his head,
With half-shut violet eye—
He had known little of her dread,
Nought of her agony !

Oh ! human Love, whose yearning heart,
Through all things vainly true,
So stamps upon thy mortal part
Its passionate adieu—
Surely thou hast another lot,
There is some home for thee,
Where thou shalt rest, remembering not
The moaning of the sea !

A VOYAGER'S DREAM OF LAND.

—————His very heart athirst
 To gaze at Nature in her green array,
 Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possess'd
 With visions prompted by intense desire ;
 Fair fields appear below, such as he left
 Far distant, such as he would die to find—
 He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more.

Cowper.

THE hollow dash of waves !—the ceaseless roar !
 Silence, ye billows—vex my soul no more !

There's a spring in the woods by my sunny home,
 Afar from the dark sea's tossing foam ;
 Oh ! the fall of that fountain is sweet to hear,
 As a song from the shore to the sailor's ear.
 And the sparkle which up to the sun it throws,
 Through the feathery fern, and the olive boughs,

And the gleam on its path as it steals away
Into deeper shades from the sultry day,
And the large water-lilies that o'er its bed
Their pearly leaves to the soft light spread.
They haunt me !—I dream of that bright spring's flow.
I thirst for its rills, like a wounded roe.

~~Be still, thou sea-bird, with thy changing cry,
My spirit sickens as thy wing sweeps by !~~

Know ye my home, with the hallowing sound
Of leaves from the lime and the chestnut round ?
Know ye it, brethren, where bower'd it lies,
Under the purple of southern skies ?
With the streamy gold of the sun that shines
In through the cloud of its clustering vines,
And the breath of the fainting myrtle-flowers,
Borne from the mountains in dewy hours.
And the fire-fly's glance through the darkening shades,
Like shooting stars in the forest-glades,
And the scent of the citron at eve's dim fall—
Speak !—have ye known, have ye felt them all ?

The heavy-rolling surge,—the rocking mast !
Hush !—give my dream's deep music way, thou blast !

Oh ! the glad sounds of the joyous earth !
The notes of the singing cicala's mirth,
The murmurs that live in the mountain-pines,
The sighing of reeds as the day declines,
The wings flitting home through the crimson glow
That steeps the woods when the sun is low,
The voice of the night-bird that sends a thrill
To the heart of the leaves when the winds are still—
I hear them !—around me they rise, they swell,
They claim back my spirit with Hope to dwell,
They come with a breath from the fresh spring-time,
And waken my youth in its hour of prime.

The white foam dashes high—away, away,
Shroud my green land no more, thou blinding spray !

It is there !—down the mountains I see the sweep
Of the chestnut forests, the rich and deep ;
With the burden and glory of flowers that they wear,
Floating upborne on the blue summer-air,
And the light pouring through them in tender gleams,
And the flashing forth of a thousand streams.
—Hold me not, brethren, I go, I go,
To the hills of my youth, where the myrtles blow,

To the depths of the woods, where the shadows rest,
Massy and still, on the greensward's breast,
To the rocks that resound with the water's play—
I hear the sweet laugh of my fount—give way !

Give way !—the booming surge, the tempest's roar.
The sea-bird's wail, shall vex my soul no more.

THE GRAVE OF KÖRNER.

Charles Theodore Körner, the celebrated young German poet and soldier, was killed in a skirmish with a detachment of French troops, on the 20th of August 1813, a few hours after the composition of his popular piece, "The Sword Song." He was buried at the village of Wöbbelin in Mecklenburg, under a beautiful oak, in a recess of which he had frequently deposited verses composed by him while campaigning in its vicinity. The monument erected to his memory is of cast iron, and the upper part is wrought into a lyre and a sword, a favorite emblem of Körner's, from which one of his works had been entitled. Near the grave of the poet is that of his only sister, who died of grief for his loss, having only survived him long enough to complete his portrait, and a drawing of his burial place. Over the gate of the cemetery is engraved one of his own lines.

"Vergiss die treuen Tödten nicht."

"Forget not the faithful Dead."

See Downes's Letters from Mecklenburg, and Körner's Prosaische Aufsätze, von C. A. Tiedge.

GREEN wave the oak forever o'er thy rest,
 Thou that beneath its crowning foliage sleepest,
 And, in the stillness of thy country's breast,
 Thy place of memory, as an altar, keepest ;

Brightly thy spirit o'er her hills was pour'd,
Thou of the Lyre and Sword !

Rest, Bard, rest, Soldier !—by the father's hand
Here shall the child of after years be led,
With his wreath-offering silently to stand,
In the hush'd presence of the glorious dead.
Soldier and Bard ! for thou thy path hast trod
With Freedom and with God.*

The oak wav'd proudly o'er thy burial rite,
On thy crown'd bier to slumber warriors bore thee,
And with true hearts thy brethren of the fight
Wept as they vail'd their drooping banners o'er thee ;
And the deep guns with rolling peal gave token,
That Lyre and Sword were broken.

Thou hast a hero's tomb—a lowlier bed
Is hers, the gentle girl beside thee lying,

* The poems of Körner, which were chiefly devoted to the cause of his country, are strikingly distinguished by religious feelings, and a confidence in the Supreme Justice for the final deliverance of Germany.

The gentle girl, that bow'd her fair young head,
When thou wert gone, in silent sorrow dying.
Brother, true friend ! the tender and the brave—
She pin'd to share thy grave.

Fame was thy gift from others—but for *her*,
To whom the wide world held that only spot—
She lov'd thee—lovely in your lives ye were,
And in your early deaths divided not.
Thou hast thine oak, thy trophy—what hath she ?
—Her own blest place by thee !

It was thy spirit, brother ! which had made
The bright world glorious to her thoughtful eye,
Since first in childhood 'midst the vines ye play'd,
And sent glad singing through the free blue sky.
Ye were but two—and when that spirit pass'd,
Woe to the one, the last !

Woe, yet not long—she linger'd but to trace
Thine image from the image in her breast,
Once, once again to see that buried face
But smile upon her, ere she went to rest.
Too sad a smile ! its living light was o'er—
It answer'd hers no more.

The earth grew silent when thy voice departed,
The home too lonely whence thy step had fled—
What then was left for her, the faithful-hearted ?—
Death, death, to still the yearning for the dead.
Softly she perish'd—be the Flower deplor'd,
Here with the Lyre and Sword.

Have ye not met ere now ?—so let those trust
That meet for moments but to part for years,
That weep, watch, pray, to hold back dust from dust,
That love, where love is but a fount of tears.
Brother, sweet sister ! peace around ye dwell—
Lyre, Sword, and Flower, farewell !

THE GRAVES OF A HOUSEHOLD.

THEY grew in beauty, side by side,
 They fill'd one home with glee—
 Their graves are sever'd far and wide,
 By mount, and stream, and sea.

The same fond mother bent at night
 O'er each fair sleeping brow ;
 She had each folded flower in sight—
 Where are those dreamers now ?

One, 'midst the forests of the West,
 By a dark stream is laid—
 The Indian knows his place of rest,
 Far in the cedar shade.

The sea, the blue lone sea, hath one,
 He lies where pearls lie deep—
He was the lov'd of all, yet none
 O'er his low bed may weep.

One sleeps where southern vines are drest,
Above the noble slain ;
He wrapt his colors round his breast,
On a blood-red field of Spain.

And one—o'er *her* the myrtle showers
Its leaves, by soft winds fann'd ;
She faded 'midst Italian flowers,
The last of that bright band.

And parted thus they rest, who play'd
Beneath the same green tree ;
Whose voices mingled as they pray'd
Around one parent knee !

They that with smiles lit up the hall,
And cheer'd with song the hearth—
Alas! for love, if *thou* wert all,
And nought beyond, Oh earth !

THE LAST WISH.

Go to the forest shade,
 Seek thou the well-known glade
 Where, heavy with sweet dew, the violets lie ;
 Gleaming through moss-tufts deep,
 Like dark eyes fill'd with sleep,
 And bath'd in hues of summer's midnight sky. .

Bring me their buds, to shed
 Around my dying bed
 A breath of May, and of the wood's repose ;
 For I, in sooth, depart
 With a reluctant heart,
 That fain would linger where the bright sun glows.

Fain would I stay with thee—
 Alas ! this must not be ;
 Yet bring me still the gifts of happier hours !
 Go where the fountain's breast
 Catches, in glassy rest,
 The dim green light that pours through laurel bowers.

I know how softly bright,
Steep'd in that tender light,
The water-lilies tremble there, e'en now ;
Go to the pure stream's edge,
And from its whispering sedge
Bring me those flowers, to cool my fever'd brow.

Then, as in hope's young days,
Track thou the antique maze
Of the rich garden, to its grassy round ;
There is a lone white rose,
Shedding, in sudden snows,
Its faint leaves o'er the emerald turf around.

Well know'st thou that fair tree !
—A murmur of the bee
Dwells ever in the hoarded lane above ;
Bring me one pearly flower,
Of all its clustering shower—
For on that spot we first reveal'd our love !

Gather one woodbine bough,
Then, from the lattice low
Of the bower'd cottage which I bade thee mark

When by the hamlet last
Through dim wood-lanes we pass'd,
Where dews were glancing to the glow-worm's spark.

Haste ! to my pillow bear
Those fragrant things, and fair—
My hand no more may bind them up at eve ;
Yet shall their odor soft
One bright dream round me waft,
Of life, youth, summer—all that I must leave !

And oh ! if thou wouldst ask,
Wherefore thy steps I task
The grove, the stream, the hamlet-vale to trace ;
—'Tis that some thought of me,
When I am gone, may be
The spirit bound to each familiar place.

I bid mine image dwell,
(Oh ! break thou not the spell !)
In the deep wood, and by the fountain side—
Thou must not, my belov'd !
Rove where we two have rov'd,
Forgetting her that in her spring-time died.

A MONARCH'S DEATH-BED.

The Emperor Albert of Hapsburg, who was assassinated by his nephew, afterwards called John the Parricide, was left to die by the way-side, and was supported in his last moments by a female peasant, who happened to be passing.

A MONARCH on his death-bed lay—
 Did ceasers waft perfume,
 And soft lamps pour their silver ray,
 Through his proud chamber's glass?
 He lay upon a greenward bed,
 Beneath a darkening sky—
 A lone tree waving o'er his head,
 A swift stream rolling by.

Had he then fallen, as warriors fall,
 Where spear strikes fire from spear?—
 Was there a banner for his pall,
 A buckler for his tier?—

Not so—nor cloven shields nor helms
Had strewn the bloody sod,
Where he, the helpless lord of realms,
Yielded his soul to God.

Were there not friends, with words of cheer,
And princely vassals nigh?
And priests, the crucifix to rear
Before the fading eye?—
A peasant girl, that royal head
Upon her bosom laid;
And, shrinking not for woman's dread,
The face of death survey'd.

Alone she sat—from hill and wood
Red sank the mournful sun;
Fast gush'd the fount of noble blood,
Treason its worst had done!
With her long hair she vainly press'd
The wounds, to stanch their tide—
Unknown, on that meek humble breast,
Imperial Albert died!

THE HOUR OF DEATH.

LEAVES have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north-wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, oh ! Death.

Day is for mortal care,
Eve for glad meetings round the joyous hearth,
Night for the dreams of sleep, the voice of prayer—
But all for thee, thou Mightiest of the earth.

The banquet hath its hour,
Its feverish hour of mirth, and song, and wine ;
There comes a day for grief's o'erwhelming power,
A time for softer tears—but all are thine.

Youth and the opening rose
May look like things too glorious for decay,
And smile at thee—but thou art not of those
That wait the ripen'd bloom to seize their prey.

Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north-wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, oh! Death.

We know when moons shall wane,
When summer-birds from far shall cross the sea,
When autumn's hue shall tinge the golden grain—
But who shall teach us when to look for thee?—

Is it when Spring's first gale
Comes forth to whisper where the violets lie?
Is it when roses in our paths grow pale?—
They have *one* season—*all* are ours to die!

Thou art where billows foam,
Thou art where music melts upon the air;
Thou art around us in our peaceful home,
And the world calls us forth—and thou art there.

Thou art where friend meets friend,
Beneath the shadow of the elm to rest—
Thou art where foe meets foe, and trumpets rend
The skies, and swords beat down the princely crest.

**Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north-wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, oh ! Death.**

THE RELEASE OF TASSO.

THERE came a bard to Rome ; he brought a lyre
 Of sounds to peal through Rome's triumphant sky,
 To mourn a hero on his funeral pyre,
 Or greet a conquerer with its war-notes high ;
 For on each chord had fallen the gift of fire,
 The living breath of Power and Victory—
 Yet he, its lord, the sovereign city's guest,
 Sigh'd but to flee away, and be at rest.

He brought a spirit whose ethereal birth
 Was of the loftiest, and whose haunts had been
 Amidst the marvels and the pomps of earth,
 Wild fairy-bowers, and groves of deathless green,
 And fields, where mail-clad bosoms prove their worth,
 When flashing swords light up the stormy scene—
 He brought a weary heart, a wasted frame,—
 'The Child of Visions from a dungeon came.

On the blue waters, as in joy they sweep,
With starlight floating o'er their swells and falls,
On the blue waters of the Adrian deep,
His numbers had been sung—and in the halls,
Where, through rich foliage if a sunbeam peep,
It seems Heaven's wakening to the sculptur'd walls,—
Had princes listen'd to those lofty strains,
While the high soul they burst from, pin'd in chains.

And in the summer-gardens, where the spray
Of founts, far-glancing from their marble bed,
Rains on the flowering myrtles in its play,
And the sweet limes, and glassy leaves that spread
Round the deep golden citrons—o'er his lay
Dark eyes, dark, soft, Italian eyes had shed
Warm tears, fast-glittering in that sun, whose light
Was a forbidden glory to his sight.

Oh ! if it be that wizard sign and spell,
And talisman had power of old to bind,
In the dark chambers of some cavern-cell,
Or knotted oak, the spirits of the wind,

Things of the lightning-pinion, wont to dwell
High o'er the reach of eagles, and to find
Joy in the rush of storms—even such a doom
Was that high minstrel's in his dungeon-gloom.

But he was free at last !—the glorious land
Of the white Alps and pine-crown'd Apennines,
Along whose shore the sapphire seas expand,
And the wastes teem with myrtle, and the shrines
Of long-forgotten gods from Nature's hand
Receive bright offerings still ; with all its vines,
And rocks, and ruins, clear before him lay—
The seal was taken from the founts of day.

The winds came o'er his cheek ; the soft winds, blending
All summer-sounds and odors in their sigh ;
The orange-groves wav'd round ; the hills were sending
Their bright streams down ; the free birds darting by,
And the blue festal heavens above him bending,
As if to fold a world where none could die !
And who was he that look'd upon these things ?
—If but of earth, yet one whose thoughts were wings .

To bear him o'er creation ! and whose mind
Was as an air-harp, wakening to the sway
Of sunny Nature's breathings unconfin'd,
With all the mystic harmonies that lay
Far in the slumber of its chords enshrin'd,
Till the light breeze went thrilling on its way.
—There was no sound that wander'd through the sky,
But told him secrets in its melody.

Was the deep forest lonely unto him
With all its whispering leaves ? Each dell and glade
Teem'd with such forms as on the moss-clad brim
Of fountains, in their sparry grottoes, play'd,
Seen by the Greek of yore through twilight dim,
Or misty noontide in the laurel-shade.
—There is no solitude on earth so deep
As that where man decrees that man should weep !

But oh ! the life in Nature's green domains,
The breathing sense of joy ! where flowers are springing
By starry thousands, on the slopes and plains,
And the grey rocks—and all the arch'd woods ringing,

And the young branches trembling to the strains
Of wild-born creatures, through the sunshine winging
Their fearless flight—and sylvan echoes round,
Mingling all tones to one Eolian sound ;

And the glad voice, the laughing voice of streams,
And the low cadence of the silvery sea,
And reed-notes from the mountains, and the beams
Of the warm sun—all these are for the free !
And they were *his* once more, the bard, whose dreams
Their spirit still had haunted.—Could it be
That he had borne the chain ?—oh ! who shall dare
To say how much man's heart uncrush'd may bear ?

So deep a root hath hope !—but woe for this,
Our frail mortality, that aught so bright,
So almost burthen'd with excess of bliss,
As the rich hour which back to summer's light
Calls the worn captive, with the gentle kiss
Of winds, and gush of waters, and the sight
Of the green earth, must so be bought with years
Of the heart's fever, parching up its tears ;

And feeding a slow fire on all its powers,
Until the boon for which we gasp in vain,
If hardly won at length, too late made ours
When the soul's wing is broken, comes like rain
Withheld till evening, on the stately flowers
Which wither'd in the noontide, ne'er again
To lift their heads in glory.—So doth Earth
Breathe on her gifts, and melt away their worth.

The sailor dies in sight of that green shore,
Whose fields, in slumbering beauty, seem'd to lie
On the deep's foam, amidst its hollow roar
Call'd up to sunlight by his fantasy—
And, when the shining desert-mists that wore
The lake's bright semblance, have been all pass'd by,
The pilgrim sinks beside the fountain-wave,
Which flashes from its rock, too late to save.

Or if we live, if that, too dearly bought,
And made too precious by long hopes and fears,
Remains our own—love, darken'd and o'erwrought
By memory of privation, love, which wears

And casts o'er life a troubled hue of thought,
Becomes the shadow of our closing years,
Making it almost misery to possess
Aught, watch'd with such unquiet tenderness.

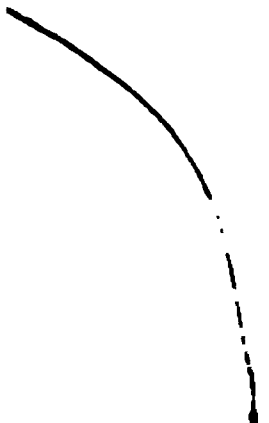
Such unto him, the bard, the worn and wild,
And sick with hope deferr'd, from whom the sky,
With all its clouds in burning glory pil'd,
Had been shut out by long captivity ;
Such, freedom was to Tasso.—As a child
Is to the mother, whose foreboding eye
In its too radiant glance, from day to day,
Reads that which calls the brightest first away.

And he became a wanderer—in whose breast
Wild fear, which, e'en when every sense doth sleep,
Clings to the burning heart, a wakeful guest,
Sat brooding as a spirit, rais'd to keep
Its gloomy vigil of intense unrest
O'er treasures, burthening life, and buried deep
In cavern-tomb, and sought, through shades and stealth,
By some pale mortal, trembling at his wealth.

But woe for those who trample o'er a mind !
A deathless thing.—They know not what they do,
Or what they deal with !—Man perchance may bind
The flower his step hath bruised ; or light anew
The torch he quenches ; or to music wind
Again the lyre-string from his touch that flew—
But for the soul !—oh ! tremble, and beware
To lay rude hands upon God's mysteries *there* !

For blindness wraps that world—our touch may turn
Some balance, fearfully and darkly hung,
Or put out some bright spark, whose ray should burn
To point the way a thousand rocks among—
Or break some subtle chain, which none discern,
Though binding down the terrible, the strong,
Th' o'ersweeping passions—which to loose on life
Is to set free the elements for strife !

Who then to power and glory shall restore
That which our evil rashness hath undone ?
Who unto mystic harmony once more
Attune those viewless chords ?—There is but One !



He that through dust the stream of life can pour,
The Mighty and the Merciful alone !
—Yet oft His paths have midnight for their shade—
He leaves to man the ruin man hath made!—

TASSO AND HIS SISTER.

“Devant vous est Sorrente ; là demeuroit la sœur de Tasse, quand il vint en pèlerin demander à cette obscure amie, un asile contre l'injustice des princes.—Ses longues douleurs avoient presque égaré sa raison ; il ne lui restoit plus que du génie.”

Corinne.

SHE sat, where on each wind that sigh'd
 The citron's breath went by ;
 While the deep gold of eventide
 Burn'd in the Italian sky.
 Her bower was one where daylight's close
 Full oft sweet laughter found,
 As thence the voice of childhood rose
 To the high vineyards round.

But still and thoughtful, at her knee,
 Her children stood that hour,

Their bursts of song, and dancing glee,
Hush'd as by words of power.
With bright, fix'd, wondering eyes that gaz'd
Up to their mother's face ;
With brows through parting ringlets rais'd,
They stood in silent grace.

While she—yet something o'er her look
Of mournfulness was spread—
Forth from a poet's magic book
The glorious numbers read ;
The proud, undying lay, which pour'd
Its light on evil years ;
His of the gifted Pen and Sword,*
The triumph and the tears.

She read of fair Erminia's flight,
Which Venice once might hear,
Sung on her glittering seas at night,
By many a gondolier ;

* It is scarcely necessary to recall the well known Italian saying, that Tasso with his sword and pen was superior to all men.

Of him she read, who broke the charm
That wrapt the myrtle grove ;
Of Godfrey's deeds, of Tancred's arm,
That slew his Paynim love.

Young cheeks around that bright page glow'd,
Young holy hearts were stirr'd ;
And the meek tears of woman flow'd
Fast o'er each burning word.
And sounds of breeze, and fount, and leaf,
Came sweet each pause between ;
When a strange voice of sudden grief
Burst on the gentle scene.

The mother turn'd—a way-worn man,
In pilgrim garb stood nigh,
Of stately mien, yet wild and wan,
Of proud, yet restless eye.
But drops that would not stay for pride,
From that dark eye gush'd free,
As, pressing his pale brow, he cried,
“ Forgotten ! e'en by thee !

“ Am I so chang’d ?—and yet we two
Oft hand in hand have play’d—
This brow hath been all bath’d in dew,
From wreaths which thou hast made.
We have knelt down and said one prayer,
And sang one vesper strain—
My thoughts are dim with clouds of care—
Tell me those words again !

“ Life hath been heavy on my head ;
I come, a stricken deer,
Bearing the heart, ’midst crowds that bled,
To bleed in stillness here.”
—She gaz’d—till thoughts that long had slept,
Shook all her thrilling frame—
She fell upon his neck, and wept,
And breath’d her brother’s name.

Her *brother’s* name !—and who was he,
The weary one, th’ unknown,
That came, the bitter world to flee,
A stranger to his own ?

—He was the bard of gifts divine,
 To sway the hearts of men ;
He of the song for Salem's shrine,
 He of the Sword and Pen !

TO THE POET WORDSWORTH.

THINE is a strain to read amongst the hills,
The old and full of voices—by the source
Of some free stream, whose gladdening presence fills
The solitude with sound—for in its course
Even such is thy deep song, that seems a part
Of those high scenes, a fountain from their heart.

Or its calm spirit fitly may be taken
To the still breast, in some sweet garden-bowers,
Where summer winds each tree's low tones awaken,
And bud and bell with changes mark the hours.
There let thy thoughts be with me, while the day
Sinks with a golden and serene decay.

Or by some hearth where happy faces meet,
When night hath hush'd the woods with all their birds,
There, from some gentle voice, that lay were sweet
As antique music, link'd with household words.
While, in pleas'd murmurs, woman's lip might move,
And the rais'd eye of childhood shine in love.

Or where the shadows of dark solemn yews
Brood silently o'er some lone burial-ground,
Thy verse hath power that brightly might diffuse
A breath, a kindling, as of spring, around,
From its own glow of hope and courage high,
And steadfast faith's victorious constancy.

True bard and holy !—thou art e'en as one
Who, by some secret gift of soul or eye,
In every spot beneath the smiling sun,
Sees where the springs of living waters lie—
Unseen awhile they sleep—till, touch'd by thee,
Bright, healthful waves flow forth, to each glad wanderer
free !

THE SONG OF THE CURFEW.

**HARK ! from the dim church-tower,
The deep, slow curfew's chime !
A heavy sound unto hall and bower,
In England's olden time !
Sadly 'twas heard by him who came
From the fields of his toil at night,
And who might not see his own hearth's flame
In his children's eyes make light.**

**Sadly and sternly heard
As it quench'd the wood-fire's glow,
Which had cheer'd the board, with the mirthful word,
And the red wine's foaming flow ;
Until that sullen, booming knell,
Flung out from every fane,
On harp, and lip, and spirit fell,
With a weight, and with a chain.**

Woe for the wanderer then
In the wild-deer's forests far !
No cottage lamp, to the haunts of men,
Might guide him as a star.
And woe for him, whose wakeful soul,
With lone aspirings fill'd,
Would have liv'd o'er some immortal scroll,
While the sounds of earth were still'd.

And yet a deeper woe,
For the watchers by the bed,
Where the fondly lov'd, in pain lay low,
And rest forsook the head.
For the mother, doom'd *unseen* to keep
By the dying babe her place,
And to feel its flitting pulse, and weep,
Yet not behold its face !

Darkness, in chieftain's hall !
Darkness, in peasant's cot !
While Freedom, under that shadowy pall,
Sat mourning o'er her lot.

Oh ! the fireside's peace we well may prize,
For blood hath flow'd like rain,
Pour'd forth to make sweet sanctuaries
Of England's homes again !

Heap the yule-faggots high,
Till the red light fills the room !
It is home's own hour, when the stormy sky
Grows thick with evening gloom.
Gather ye round the holy hearth,
And by its gladdening blaze,
Unto thankful bliss we will change our mirth,
With a thought of the olden days.

HYMN FOR CHRISTMAS.

Oh ! lovely voices of the sky
 Which hymn'd the Saviour's birth,
Are ye not singing still on high,
 Ye that sang, " Peace on earth " ?
 To us yet speak the strains
 Wherewith, in time gone by,
Ye bless'd the Syrian swains,
 Oh ! voices of the sky !

Oh ! clear and shining light, whose beams
 That hour Heaven's glory shed,
Around the palms, and o'er the streams,
 And on the shepherd's head.
 Be near, through life and death,
 As in that holiest night
Of hope, and joy, and faith—
 Oh ! clear and shining light !

Oh ! star which led to Him, whose love
Brought down man's ransom free—
Where art thou ?—'midst the host above,
May we still gaze on thee ?
In heaven thou art not set,
Thy rays earth may not dim ;
Send them to guide us yet,
Oh ! star which led to Him !

CHRIST STILLING THE TEMPEST.

“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves ; for the wind was contrary.”

St. Matthew, xiv. 24.

FEAR was within the tossing bark,
When stormy winds grew loud ;
And waves came rolling high and dark,
And the tall mast was bow'd.

And men stood breathless in their dread,
And baffled in their skill—
But One was there, who rose and said
To the wild sea, “ Be still ! ”

And the wind ceas'd—it ceas'd !—that word
Pass'd through the gloomy sky ;
The troubled billows knew their Lord,
And sank beneath his eye.

And slumber settled on the deep,
And silence on the blast,
As when the righteous falls asleep,
When death's fierce throes are past.

Thou that didst rule the angry hour,
And tame the tempest's mood—
Oh ! send thy spirit forth in power,
O'er our dark souls to brood !

Thou that didst bow the billow's pride,
Thy mandates to fulfil—
Speak, speak to passion's raging tide,
Speak and say—"Peace, be still !"

CHRIST'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

HE knelt—the Saviour knelt and pray'd,
 When but His Father's eye
 Look'd through the lonely garden's shade,
 On that dread agony !
 The Lord of all, above, beneath,
 Was bow'd with sorrow unto death.

The sun set in a fearful hour,
 The skies might well grow dim,
 When this mortality had power
 So to o'ershadow *Him* !
 That He who gave man's breath might know,
 The very depths of human woe.

He knew them all—the doubt, the strife,
 The faint, perplexing dread,
 The mists that hang o'er parting life,
 All darken'd round His head !
 And the Deliverer knelt to pray—
 Yet pass'd it not, that cup, away.

It pass'd not—though the stormy wave
 Had sunk beneath His tread ;
 It pass'd not—though to Him the grave
 Had yielded up its dead.
 But there was sent Him from on high
 A gift of strength, for man to die.*

And was *His* mortal hour beset
 With anguish and dismay ?
 —How may *we* meet our conflict yet,
 In the dark, narrow way ?
 How, but through Him, that path who trod ?
 Save, or we perish, Son of God !

* “ And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.”

St. Luke, xxii. 43.

THE SUNBEAM.

THOU art no lingerer in monarch's hall,
A joy thou art, and a wealth to all !
A bearer of hope unto land and sea—
Sunbeam ! what gift hath the world like thee ?

Thou art walking the billows, and Ocean smiles—
Thou hast touch'd with glory his thousand isles—
Thou hast lit up the ships, and the feathery foam,
And gladden'd the sailor, like words from home.

To the solemn depths of the forest-shades,
Thou art streaming on through their green arcades,
And the quivering leaves that have caught thy glow,
Like fire-flies glance to the pools below.

I look'd on the mountains—a vapor lay
Folding their heights in its dark array ;
Thou brakest forth—and the mist became
A crown and a mantle of living flame.

I look'd on the peasant's lowly cot—
Something of sadness had wrapt the spot ;
But a gleam of *thee* on its casement fell,
And it laugh'd into beauty at that bright spell.

To the earth's wild places a guest thou art,
Flushing the waste like the rose's heart ;
And thou scornest not, from thy pomp to shed
A tender light on the ruin's head.

Thou tak'st through the dim church-aisle thy way,
And its pillars from twilight flash forth to day,
And its high pale tombs, with their trophies old,
Are bath'd in a flood as of burning gold.

And thou turnest not from the humblest grave,
Where a flower to the sighing winds may wave ;
Thou scatterest its gloom like the dreams of rest,
Thou sleepest in love on its grassy breast.

Sunbeam of summer, oh ! what is like thee ?
Hope of the wilderness, joy of the sea !
—*One* thing is like thee, to mortals given,—
The faith, touching all things with hues of Heaven.

THE TRAVELLER AT THE SOURCE OF
THE NILE.

IN sunset's light o'er Afric thrown,
A wanderer proudly stood
Beside the well-spring, deep and lone,
Of Egypt's awful flood ;
The cradle of that mighty birth,
So long a hidden thing to earth.

He heard its life's first murmuring sound,
A low mysterious tone ;
A music sought, but never found
By kings and warriors gone ;
He listen'd—and his heart beat high—
That was the song of victory !

The rapture of a conqueror's mood
Rush'd burning through his frame,

The depths of that green solitude
Its torrents could not tame,
Though stillness lay, with eve's last smile,
Round those calm fountains of the Nile.

Night came with stars :—across his soul
There swept a sudden change,
Ev'n at the pilgrim's glorious goal,
A shadow dark and strange,
Breath'd from the thought, so swift to fall
O'er triumph's hour—*And is this all ?*

No more than this !—what seem'd it *now*
First by that spring to stand ?
A thousand streams of lovelier flow
Bath'd his own mountain land !
Whence, far o'er waste and ocean track,
Their wild sweet voices call'd him back.

They call'd him back to many a glade,
His childhood's haunt of play,
Where brightly through the beechen shade
Their waters glanc'd away ;
They call'd him, with their sounding waves,
Back to his fathers' hills and graves.

But darkly mingling with the thought
Of each familiar scene,
Rose up a fearful vision, fraught
With all that lay between ;
The Arab's lance, the desert's gloom,
The whirling sands, the red simoom !

Where was the glow of power and pride ?
The spirit born to roam ?
His weary heart within him died
With yearnings for his home ;
All vainly struggling to repress
That gush of painful tenderness.

He wept—the stars of Afric's heaven
Beheld his bursting tears,
Ev'n on that spot where fate had given
The meed of toiling years.
—Oh happiness ! how far we flee
Thine own sweet paths in search of thee !*

* The arrival of Bruce at what he considered to be the source of the Nile, was followed almost immediately by feelings thus suddenly fluctuating from triumph to despondence. See his *Travels in Abyssinia*.

THE VAUDOIS VALLEYS.

**YEs, thou hast met the sun's last smile,
From the haunted hills of Rome ;
By many a bright Ægean isle,
Thou hast seen the billows foam :**

**From the silence of the Pyramid
Thou hast watch'd the solemn flow
Of the Nile, that with its waters hid
The ancient realm below :**

**Thy heart hath burn'd as shepherds sung
Some wild and warlike strain,
Where the Moorish horn once proudly rung
Through the pealing hills of Spain :**

**And o'er the lonely Grecian streams
Thou hast heard the laurels moan,
With a sound yet murmuring in thy dreams
Of the glory that is gone.**

But go thou to the pastoral vales
Of the Alpine mountains old,
If thou wouldst hear immortal tales
By the wind's deep whispers told !

Go, if thou lov'st the soil to tread,
Where man hath nobly striven,
And life, like incense, hath been shed,
An offering unto Heaven.

For o'er the snows, and round the pines,
Hath swept a noble flood ;
The nurture of the peasant's vines
Hath been the martyr's blood !

A spirit, stronger than the sword,
And loftier than despair,
Through all the heroic region pour'd,
Breathes in the generous air.

A memory clings to every steep
Of long-enduring faith,
And the sounding streams glad record keep
Of courage unto death.

Ask of the peasant *where* his sires
For truth and freedom bled,
Ask, where were lit the torturing fires,
Where lay the holy dead ;

And he will tell thee, all around,
On fount, and turf, and stone,
Far as the chamois' foot can bound,
Their ashes have been sown !

Go, when the sabbath bell is heard *
Up through the wilds to float,
When the dark old woods and caves are stirr'd
To gladness by the note ;

When forth, along their thousand rills,
The mountain people come,

* See "Gilly's Researches amongst the Mountains of Piedmont," for an interesting description of a sabbath day in the upper regions of the Vaudois. The inhabitants of these Protestant valleys, who, like the Swiss, repair with their flocks and herds, to the summits of the hills during the summer, are followed thither by their pastors, and at that season of the year, assembled on the sacred day, to worship in the open air.

●

**Join thou their worship on those hills
Of glorious martyrdom.**

**And while the song of praise ascends,
And while the torrent's voice
Like the swell of many an organ blends,
Then let thy soul rejoice !**

**Rejoice, that human hearts, through scorn,
Through shame, through death, made strong,
Before the rocks and heavens have borne
Witness of God so long !**

THE SONGS OF OUR FATHERS.

“Sing aloud

Old songs, the precious music of the heart.”

Wordsworth.

SING them upon the sunny hills,
 When days are long and bright,
 And the blue gleam of shining rills
 Is loveliest to the sight.
 Sing them along the misty moor,
 Where ancient hunters rov'd,
 And swell them through the torrent's roar—
 The songs our fathers lov'd !

The songs their souls rejoic'd to hear
 When harps were in the hall,
 And each proud note made lance and spear
 Thrill on the banner'd wall :

The songs that through our valleys green,
Sent on from age to age,
Like his own river's voice, have been
The peasant's heritage.

The reaper sings them when the vale
Is fill'd with plummy sheaves ;
The woodman, by the starlight pale
Cheer'd homeward through the leaves :
And unto them the glancing oars
A joyous measure keep,
Where the dark rocks that crest our shores
Dash back the foaming deep.

So let it be !—a light they shed
O'er each old fount and grove ;
A memory of the gentle dead,
A spell of lingering love :
Murmuring the names of mighty men,
They bid our streams roll on,
And link high thoughts to every glen
Where valiant deeds were done.

Teach them your children round the hearth,
When evening-fires burn clear,
And in the fields of harvest mirth,
And on the hills of deer !
So shall each unforgotten word,
When far those lov'd ones roam,
Call back the hearts that once it stirr'd,
To childhood's holy home.

The green woods of their native land
Shall whisper in the strain,
The voices of their household band
Shall sweetly speak again ;
The heathery heights in vision rise
Where like the stag they rov'd—
Sing to your sons those melodies,
The songs your fathers lov'd.

THE BURIAL
OF
WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

Lowly upon his bier
The royal conqueror lay,
Baron and chief stood near
Silent in war-array.

Down the long minster's aisle,
Crowds mutely gazing stream'd,
Altar and tomb, the while,
Through mists of incense gleam'd :

And by the torch's blaze
The stately priest had said
High words of power and praise,
To the glory of the dead.

They lower'd him, with the sound
Of requiems, to repose,
When from the throngs around
A solemn voice arose :

“ Forbear, forbear ! ” it cried,
“ In the holiest name forbear !
He hath conquer'd regions wide,
But he shall not slumber *there*.

“ By the violated hearth
Which made way for yon proud shrine,
By the harvests which this earth
Hath borne to me and mine ;

“ By the home ev'n here o'erthrown,
On my children's native spot,—
Hence ! with his dark renown
Cumber our birth-place not !

“ Will my sire's unransom'd field
O'er which your censers wave,
To the buried spoiler yield
Soft slumber in the grave ?

“ The tree before him fell
Which we cherish'd many a year,
But its deep root yet shall swell
And heave against his bier.

“ The land that I have till'd,
Hath yet its brooding breast
With my home's white ashes fill'd—
And it shall not give him rest.

“ Here each proud column's bed
Hath been wet by weeping eyes,—
Hence ! and bestow your dead
Where no wrong against him cries !”

Shame glow'd on each dark face
Of those proud and steel-girt men,
And they bought with gold a place
For their leader's dust e'en then.

A little earth for him
Whose banner flew so far !
And a peasant's tale could dim
The name, a nation's star !

One deep voice thus arose
From a heart which wrongs had riven—
Oh ! who shall number those
That were but heard in Heaven ? *

* For the particulars of this and other scarcely less remarkable circumstances which attended the obsequies of William the Conqueror, see Sismondi's *Histoire des Français*, vol. iv. p. 480.

THE SOUND OF THE SEA.

THOU art sounding on, thou mighty sea,
For ever and the same !
The ancient rocks yet ring to thee,
Whose thunders nought can tame.

Oh ! many a glorious voice is gone,
From the rich bowers of earth,
And hush'd is many a lovely one
Of mournfulness or mirth.

The Dorian flute that sigh'd of yore
Along thy wave, is still ;
The harp of Judah peals no more
On Zion's awful hill.

And Memnon's lyre hath lost the chord
That breath'd the mystic tone,
And the songs, at Rome's high triumphs pour'd,
Are with her eagles flown.

And mute the Moorish horn, that rang
O'er stream and mountain free,
And the hymn the leagued Crusaders sang,
Hath died in Galilee.

But thou art swelling on, thou deep,
Through many an olden clime,
Thy billowy anthem, ne'er to sleep
Until the close of time.

Thou liftest up thy solemn voice
To every wind and sky,
And all our earth's green shores rejoice
In that one harmony.

It fills the noontide's calm profound,
The sunset's heaven of gold ;
And the still midnight hears the sound,
Ev'n as when first it roll'd.

Let there be silence, deep and strange,
Where sceptred cities rose !
Thou speak'st of one who doth not change—
—So may our hearts repose.

CASABIANCA.*

THE boy stood on the burning deck, -
 Whence all but him had fled ;
 The flame that lit the battle's wreck,
 Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
 As born to rule the storm ;
 A creature of heroic blood,
 A proud, though child-like form.

The flames roll'd on—he would not go,
 Without his father's word ;

* Young Casabianca, a boy about thirteen years old, son to the admiral of the Orient, remained at his post (in the battle of the Nile), after the ship had taken fire, and all the guns had been abandoned ; and perished in the explosion of the vessel, when the flames had reached the powder.

That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He call'd aloud—" Say, father, say
If yet my task is done ?"
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

" Speak, Father !" once again he cried,
" If I may yet be gone !"
—And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames roll'd on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair ;
And look'd from that lone post of death,
In still, yet brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,
" My father ! must I stay ?"
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendor wild,
They caught the flag on high,

And stream'd above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound—
The boy—oh ! where was he ?
—Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strew'd the sea !

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part—
But the noblest thing that perish'd there,
Was that young faithful heart.

THE ADOPTED CHILD.

“ **WHY** wouldst thou leave me, oh ! gentle child ?
 Thy home on the mountain is bleak and wild,
 A straw-roof'd cabin with lowly wall—
 Mine is a fair and a pillar'd hall,
 Where many an image of marble gleams,
 And the sunshine of picture for ever streams.”

“ Oh ! green is the turf where my brothers play,
 Through the long bright hours of the summer-day,
 They find the red cup-moss where they climb,
 And they chase the bee o'er the scented thyme ;
 And the rocks where the heath-flower blooms they **know**—
 Lady, kind lady ! oh ! let me go.”

“ Content thee, boy ! in my bower to dwell,
 Here are sweet sounds which thou lovest well ;
 Flutes on the air in the stilly noon,
 Harps which the wandering breezes tune ;
 And the silvery wood-note of many a bird,
 Whose voice was ne'er in thy mountains heard.”

“ My mother sings, at the twilight’s fall,
A song of the hills far more sweet than all ;
She sings it under our own green tree,
To the babe half slumbering on her knee ;
I dreamt last night of that music low—
Lady, kind lady ! oh ! let me go.”

“ Thy mother is gone from her cares to rest,
She hath taken the babe on her quiet breast ;
Thou wouldst meet her footstep, my boy, no more,
Nor hear her song at the cabin door.
—Come thou with me to the vineyards nigh,
And we’ll pluck the grapes of the richest dye.”

“ Is my mother gone from her home away ?
—But I know that my brothers are there at play.
I know they are gathering the fox-glove’s bell,
Or the long fern-leaves by the sparkling well,
Or they launch their boats where the bright streams flow—
Lady, kind lady ! oh ! let me go.”

“ Fair child ! thy brothers are wanderers now,
They sport no more on the mountain’s brow,
They have left the fern by the spring’s green side,
And the streams where the fairy barks were tried.

—Be thou at peace in thy brighter lot,
For thy cabin-home is a lonely spot.”

“ Are they gone, all gone from the sunny hill ?
—But the bird and the blue-fly rove o’er it still,
And the red-deer bound in their gladness free,
And the turf is bent by the singing bee,
And the waters leap, and the fresh winds blow—
Lady, kind lady ! oh ! let me go.”

THE DEPARTED.

————— “Thou shalt lie down
 With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings,
 The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,
 Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
 All in one mighty sepulchre.”——

Bryant.

AND shrink ye from the way
 To the spirit's distant shore ?
 Earth's mightiest men, in arm'd array,
 Are thither gone before.

The warrior kings, whose banner
 Flew far as eagles fly,
 They are gone where swords avail them not,
 From the feast of victory.

And the seers, who sat of yore
By orient palm or wave,
They have pass'd with all their starry lore—
Can *ye* still fear the grave?

—We fear, we fear!—the sunshine
Is joyous to behold,
And we reck not of the buried kings,
Or the awful seers of old.

Ye shrink!—the bards whose lays
Have made your deep hearts burn,
They have left the sun, and the voice of praise,
For the land whence none return:

And the lovely, whose memorial
Is the verse that cannot die,
They too are gone with their glorious bloom,
From the gaze of human eye.

Would ye not join that throng
Of the earth's departed flowers,
And the masters of the mighty song
In their far and fadeless bowers?

Those songs are high and holy,
But they vanquish not our fear ;
Not from *our* path those flowers are gone—
We fain would linger here !

Linger then yet awhile,
As the last leaves on the bough !
—Ye have lov'd the gleam of many a smile
That is taken from you now.

There have been sweet singing voices
In your walks that now are still ;
There are seats left void in your earthly homes,
Which none again may fill.

Soft eyes are seen no more
That made spring-time in your heart ;
Kindred and friends are gone before,—
And *ye* still fear to part ?

—We fear not now, we fear not !
Though the way through darkness bends ;
Our souls are strong to follow *them*,
Our own familiar friends !

THE BREEZE FROM LAND.

—————“As when to them who sail
 Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
 Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
 Sabeian odours from the spicy shore
 Of Araby the Blest ; with such delay
 Well pleas'd they slack their course, and many a league,
 Cheer'd with the grateful smell, old Ocean smiles.”

Paradise Lost.

Joy is upon the lonely seas,
 When Indian forests pour
 Forth to the billow and the breeze
 Their fragrance from the shore ;
 Joy, when the soft air's glowing sigh
 Bears on the breath of Araby.

Oh ! welcome are the winds that tell
 A wanderer of the deep

Where far away the jasmines dwell,
And where the myrrh-trees weep !
Bless'd, on the sounding surge and foam,
Are tidings of the citron's home !

The sailor at the helm they meet,
And hope his bosom stirs,
Upspringing, 'midst the waves to greet
The fair earth's messengers,
That woo him, from the mournful main,
Back to her glorious bowers again.

They woo him, whispering lovely tales
Of many a flowering glade,
And fount's bright gleam in island-vales
Of golden-fruited shade ;
Across his lone ship's wake they bring
A vision and a glow of spring !

And oh ! ye masters of the lay !
Come not e'en thus your songs,
That meet us on life's weary way
Amidst her toiling throngs ?
Yes ! o'er the spirit thus they bear
A current of celestial air !

Their power is from the brighter clime
That in our birth hath part,
Their tones are of the world which time
Sears not within the heart ;
They tell us of the living light
In its green places ever bright.

They call us with a voice divine
Back to our early love,
Our vows of youth at many a shrine
Whence far and soon we rove :
—Welcome, high thought and holy strain,
That make us Truth's and Heaven's again !*

* Written immediately after reading the "Remarks on the Character and Writings of Milton," in the Christian Examiner.

TO ONE OF THE AUTHOR'S CHILDREN

ON HIS BIRTHDAY, 27 AUGUST, 1825.

THOU wak'st from happy sleep to play
 With bounding heart, my boy !
 Before thee lies a long bright day
 Of summer and of joy.

Thou hast no heavy thought or dream
 To cloud thy fearless eye ;—
 Long be it thus—life's early stream
 Should still reflect the sky.

Yet ere the cares of life lie dim
 On thy young spirit's wings,
 Now in thy morn forget not Him
 From whom each pure thought springs !

So in the onward vale of tears,
 Where'er thy path may be,
 When strength hath bow'd to evil years—
He will remember thee.

TO A YOUNGER CHILD

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION, 17 SEPTEMBER, 1825.

WHERE sucks the bee now ?—Summer is flying,
Leaves on the grass-plot faded are lying ;
Violets are gone from the grassy dell,
With the cowslip-cups, where the fairies dwell ;
The rose from the garden hath pass'd away—
Yet happy, fair boy ! is thy natal day.

For love bids it welcome, the love which hath smil'd
Ever around thee, my gentle child !
Watching thy footsteps, and guarding thy bed,
And pouring out joy on thy sunny head.
Roses may vanish, but this will stay—
Happy and bright is thy natal day.

AN HOUR OF ROMANCE.

THERE were thick leaves above me and around,
And low sweet sighs, like those of childhood's sleep,
Amidst their dimness, and a fitful sound
As of soft showers on water—dark and deep
Lay the oak shadows o'er the turf, so still,
They seem'd but pictur'd glooms—a hidden rill,
Made music, such as haunts us in a dream,
Under the fern-tufts ; and a tender gleam
Of soft green light, as by the glow-worm shed,
Came pouring through the woven beech-boughs down,
And steep'd the magic page wherein I read
Of royal chivalry and old renown,
A tale of Palestine.*—Meanwhile the bee
Swept past me with a tone of summer hours,

* The Talisman—Tales of the Crusaders.

A drowsy bugle, wafting thoughts of flowers,
Blue skies, and amber sunshine—brightly free,
On filmy wings the purple dragon-fly
Shot glancing like a fairy javelin by ;
And a sweet voice of sorrow told the dell
Where sat the lone wood-pigeon.

But ere long,

All sense of these things faded, as the spell,
Breathing from that high gorgeous tale, grew strong
On my chain'd soul—'twas not the leaves I heard ;
—A Syrian wind the lion-banner stirr'd,
Through its proud floating folds—'twas not the brook,
Singing in secret through its grassy glen—
A wild shrill trumpet of the Saracen
Peal'd from the desert's lonely heart, and shook
The burning air.—Like clouds when winds are high,
O'er glittering sands flew steeds of Araby,
And tents rose up, and sudden lance and spear
Flash'd where a fountain's diamond wave lay clear,
Shadow'd by graceful palm-trees.—Then the shout
Of merry England's joy swell'd freely out,
Sent through an Eastern heaven, whose glorious hue
Made shields dark mirrors to its depths of blue ;

And harps were there—I heard their sounding strings,
As the waste echoed to the mirth of kings.

The bright masque faded—unto life's worn track
What call'd me, from its flood of glory, back ?
—A voice of happy childhood !—and they pass'd,
Banner, and harp, and Paynim trumpet's blast—
Yet might I scarce bewail the vision gone,
My heart so leapt to that sweet laughter's tone.

EVENING PRAYER AT A GIRLS' SCHOOL.

" Now in thy youth, beseech of Him,
 Who giveth, upbraiding not,
 That his light in thy heart become not dim,
 And his love be unforgot ;
 And thy God, in the darkest of days, will be
 Greenness, and beauty, and strength to thee. "

Bernard Barton.

Hush ! 'tis a holy hour—the quiet room
 Seems like a temple, while yon soft lamp sheds
 A faint and starry radiance, through the gloom
 And the sweet stillness, down on bright young heads,
 With all their clust'ring locks, untouch'd by care,
 And bow'd, as flowers are bow'd with night—in prayer.

Gaze on,—'tis lovely !—childhood's lip and cheek,
 Mantling beneath its earnest brow of thought—
 Gaze—yet what seest thou in those fair, and meek,
 And fragile things, as but for sunshine wrought ?

—Thou seest what grief must nurture for the sky,
What death must fashion for eternity !

Oh ! joyous creatures, that will sink to rest,
 Lightly, when those pure orisons are done,
As birds with slumber's honey-dew oppress'd,
 'Midst the dim folded leaves, at set of sun—
Lift up your hearts !—though yet no sorrow lies
Dark in the summer-heaven of those clear eyes ;

Though fresh within your breasts th' untroubled springs
 Of hope make melody where'er ye tread ;
And o'er your sleep bright shadows, from the wings
 Of spirits visiting but youth, be spread ;
Yet in those flute-like voices, mingling low,
Is woman's tenderness—how soon her woe !

Her lot is on you—silent tears to weep,
 And patient smiles to wear through suffering's hour,
And sumless riches, from Affection's deep,
 To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower !
And to make idols, and to find them clay,
And to bewail that worship—therefore pray !

148 EVENING PRAYER AT A GIRLS' SCHOOL.

Her lot is on you—to be found untir'd,
Watching the stars out by the bed of pain,
With a pale cheek, and yet a brow inspir'd,
And a true heart of hope, though hope be vain.
Meekly to bear with wrong, to cheer decay,
And oh ! to love through all things—therefore pray !

And take the thought of this calm vesper time,
With its low murmuring sounds and silvery light,
On through the dark days fading from their prime,
As a sweet dew to keep your souls from blight.
Earth will forsake—oh ! happy to have given
Th' unbroken heart's first fragrance unto Heaven !

THE INVOCATION.

WRITTEN AFTER THE DEATH OF A SISTER-IN-LAW.

ANSWER me, burning stars of night !

Where is the spirit gone,
That past the reach of human sight,
Even as a breeze, hath flown ?
—And the stars answer'd me—“ We roll
In light and power on high,
But, of the never-dying soul,
Ask things that cannot die ! ”

Oh ! many-ton'd and chainless wind !

Thou art a wanderer free ;
Tell me if *thou* its place canst find,
Far over mount and sea ?
—And the wind murmur'd in reply,
“ The blue deep I have cross'd,
And met its barks and billows high,
But not what thou hast lost ! ”

Ye clouds that gorgeously repose
 Around the setting sun,
Answer ! have ye a home for those
 Whose earthly race is run ?
The bright clouds answer'd—" We depart,
 We vanish from the sky ;
Ask what is deathless in thy heart
 For that which cannot die ! "

Speak, then, thou voice of God within !
 Thou of the deep low tone !
Answer me through life's restless din,
 Where is the spirit flown ?
—And the voice answer'd—" Be thou still !
 Enough to know is given ;
Clouds, winds, and stars *their* task fulfil,
 Thine is to trust in Heaven ! "

THE SIEGE OF VALENCIA:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

Indicio ha dado esta no vista hazaña
Del valor que en los siglos venideros
Tendrán los Hijos de la fuerte España,
Hijos de tal padres herederos.

Hallò sola en Numancia todo quanto
Debe con justo titulo cantarse,
Y lo que puede dar materia al canto.

Numancia de Cervantes.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE history of Spain records two instances of the severe and self-devoting heroism, which forms the subject of the following dramatic poem. The first of these occurred at the siege of Tarifa, which was defended in 1294 for Sancho, King of Castile, during the rebellion of his brother, Don Juan, by Guzman, surnamed the Good.* The second is related of Alonzo Lopez de Texeda, who, until his garrison had been utterly disabled by pestilence, maintained the city of Zamora for the children of Don Pedro the Cruel, against the forces of Henrique of Trastamara.†

Impressive as were the circumstances which distinguished both these memorable sieges, it appeared to the au-

* See Quintana's 'Vidas de Españoles celebres,' p. 53.

† See the Preface to Southey's 'Chronicle of the Cid.'

thor of the following pages that a deeper interest, as well as a stronger colour of nationality might be imparted to the scenes in which she has feebly attempted “to describe high passions and high actions ;” by connecting a religious feeling with the patriotism and high-minded loyalty which had thus been proved “faithful unto death,” and by surrounding her ideal *dramatis personæ* with recollections derived from the heroic legends of Spanish chivalry. She has, for this reason, employed the agency of imaginary characters, and fixed upon “*Valencia del Cid*” as the scene to give them

“A local habitation and a name.”

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ALVAR GONZALEZ . . *Governor of Valencia.*

ALPHONSO }
CARLOS } . . . *His Sons.*

HERNANDEZ . . . *A Priest.*

ABDULLAH . . . { *A Moorish Prince, Chief of*
 the Army besieging Valencia.

GARCIAS *A Spanish Knight.*

ELMINA *Wife to Gonzalez.*

XIMENA *Her Daughter.*

THERESA *An Attendant.*

Citizens, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

THE SIEGE OF VALENCIA.

SCENE I.

Room in a Palace of Valencia.

XIMENA singing to a Lute.

BALLAD.

“THOU hast not been with a festal throng,
At the pouring of the wine ;
Men bear not from the Hall of Song,
A mien so dark as thine !
—There’s blood upon thy shield,
There’s dust upon thy plume,
—Thou hast brought, from some disastrous field,
That brow of wrath and gloom !”

“ And is there blood upon my shield ?
—Maiden ! it well may be !

We have sent the streams from our battle-field,
All darken'd to the sea !

We have given the founts a stain,
'Midst their woods of ancient pine ;
And the ground is wet—but not with rain,
Deep-dyed—but not with wine !

“ The ground is wet—but not with rain—
We have been in war array,
And the noblest blood of Christian Spain
Hath bathed her soil to-day.

I have seen the strong man die,
And the stripling meet his fate,
Where the mountain-winds go sounding by,
In the Roncesvalles' Strait.

“ In the gloomy Roncesvalles' Strait
There are helms and lances cleft ;
And they that mov'd at morn elate
On a bed of heath are left !
There's many a fair young face,
Which the war steed hath gone o'er ;
At many a board there is kept a place
For those that come no more ! ”

“ Alas ! for love, for woman’s breast,
If woe like this must be !
—Hast thou seen a youth with an eagle crest,
And a white plume waving free ?
With his proud quick flashing eye,
And his mien of knightly state ?
Doth he come from where the swords flash’d high,
In the Roncesvalles’ Strait ? ”

“ In the gloomy Roncesvalles’ Strait
I saw and mark’d him well ;
For nobly on his steed he sate,
When the pride of manhood fell !
—But it is not *youth* which turns
From the field of spears again ;
For the boy’s high heart too wildly burns,
Till it rests amidst the slain ! ”

“ Thou canst not say that *he* lies low,
The lovely and the brave !
Oh ! none could look on his joyous brow,
And think upon the grave !
Dark, dark perchance the day
Hath been with valour’s fate,

But *he* is on his homeward way,
From the Roncesvalles' Strait ! ”

“ There is dust upon his joyous brow,
And o'er his graceful head ;
And the war-horse will not wake him now,
Though it bruise his greensward bed !
—I have seen the stripling die,
And the strong man meet his fate,
Where the mountain-winds go sounding by,
In the Roncesvalles' Strait ! ”

ELMINA *enters*.

ELMINA.

Your songs are not as those of other days,
Mine own Ximena !—Where is now the young
And buoyant spirit of the morn, which once
Breath'd in your spring-like melodies, and woke
Joy's echo from all hearts ?

XIMENA.

My mother, this
Is not the free air of our mountain-wilds ;

And these are not the halls, wherein my voice
First pour'd those gladdening strains.

ELMINA.

Alas ! thy heart
(I see it well) doth sicken for the pure
Free-wandering breezes of the joyous hills,
Where thy young brothers, o'er the rock and heath,
Bound in glad boyhood, e'en as torrent-streams
Leap brightly from the heights. Had we not been
Within these walls thus suddenly begirt,
Thou shouldst have track'd ere now, with step as light,
Their wild wood-paths.

XIMENA.

I would not but have shar'd
These hours of woe and peril, though the deep
And solemn feelings wakening at their voice,
Claim all the wrought-up spirit to themselves,
And will not blend with mirth. The storm doth hush
All floating whispery sounds, all bird-notes wild
O' th' summer-forest, filling earth and heaven
With its own awful music.—And 'tis well !
Should not a hero's child be train'd to hear
The trumpet's blast unstartled, and to look
In the fix'd face of death without dismay ?

ELMINA.

Woe ! woe ! that aught so gentle and so young
Should thus be call'd to stand i' the tempest's path,
And bear the token and the hue of death
On a bright soul so soon ! I had not shrunk
From mine own lot, but thou, my child, shouldst move
As a light breeze of heaven, through summer-bowers,
And not o'er foaming billows. We are fallen
On dark and evil days !

XIMENA.

Aye, days, that wake
All to their tasks !—Youth may not loiter now
In the green walks of spring ; and womanhood
Is summon'd unto conflicts, heretofore
The lot of warrior-souls. But we will take
Our toils upon us nobly ! Strength is born
In the deep silence of long-suffering hearts ;
Not amidst joy.

ELMINA.

Hast thou some secret woe
That thus thou speak'st ?

XIMENA.

What sorrow should be mine,
Unknown to thee ?

ELMINA.

Alas ! the baleful air
Wherewith the pestilence in darkness walks
Through the devoted city, like a blight
Amidst the rose-tints of thy cheek hath fallen,
And wrought an early withering !—Thou hast cross'd
The paths of Death, and minister'd to those
O'er whom his shadow rested, till thine eye
Hath chang'd its glancing sunbeam for a still,
Deep, solemn radiance, and thy brow hath caught
A wild and high expression, which at times
Fades unto desolate calmness, most unlike
What youth's bright mien should wear. My gentle child !
I look on thee in fear !

XIMENA.

Thou hast no cause
To fear for me. When the wild clash of steel,
And the deep tambour, and the heavy step
Of armed men, break on our morning dreams ;
When, hour by hour, the noble and the brave
Are falling round us, and we deem it much
To give them funeral-rites, and call them blest
If the good sword, in its own stormy hour,
Hath done its work upon them, ere disease

Had chill'd their fiery blood ;—it is no time
For the light mien wherewith, in happier hours,
We trod the woodland mazes, when young leaves
Were whispering in the gale.—My father comes—
Oh ! speak of me no more. I would not shade
His princely aspect with a thought less high
Than his proud duties claim.

GONZALEZ enters.

ELMINA.

My noble lord !
Welcome from this day's toil !—It is the hour
Whose shadows, as they deepen, bring repose
Unto all weary men ; and wilt not thou
Free thy mail'd bosom from the corslet's weight,
To rest at fall of eve ?

GONZALEZ.

There may be rest
For the tired peasant, when the vesper-bell
Doth send him to his cabin, and beneath
His vine and olive, he may sit at eve,
Watching his children's sport : but unto *him*
Who keeps the watch-place on the mountain-height,

When Heaven lets loose the storms that chasten realms
—Who speaks of rest ?

XIMENA.

My father, shall I fill
The wine-cup for thy lips, or bring the lute
Whose sounds thou lovest ?

GONZALEZ.

If there be strains of power
To rouse a spirit, which in triumphant scorn
May cast off nature's feebleness, and hold
Its proud career unshackled, dashing down
Tears and fond thoughts to earth ; give voice to those !
I have need of such, Ximena ! we must hear
No melting music now.

XIMENA.

I know all high
Heroic ditties of the elder time,
Sung by the mountain-Christians,¹ in the holds
Of th' everlasting hills, whose snows yet bear
The print of Freedom's step ; and all wild strains
Wherein the dark serranos* teach the rocks
And the pine forests deeply to resound

* "Serranos," mountaineers.

The praise of later champions. Wouldst thou hear
The war-song of thine ancestor, the Cid ?

GONZALEZ.

Aye, speak of him ; for in that name is power,
Such as might rescue kingdoms ! Speak of him !
We are his children ! They that can look back
I' th' annals of their house on such a name,
How should *they* take dishonour by the hand,
And o'er the threshold of their father's halls
First lead her as a guest ?

ELMINA.

Oh, why is this ?

How my heart sinks !

GONZALEZ.

It must not fail thee *yet*,
Daughter of heroes !—thine inheritance
Is strength to meet all conflicts. Thou canst number
In thy long line of glorious ancestry
Men, the bright offering of whose blood hath made
The ground it bathed e'en as an altar, whence
High thoughts shall rise forever. Bore they not,
'Midst flame and sword, their witness of the Cross,
With its victorious inspiration girt
As with a conqueror's robe, till th' infidel

O'erawed, shrank back before them ?—Aye, the earth
Doth call them martyrs, but *their* agonies
Were of a moment, tortures whose brief aim
Was to destroy, within whose powers and scope
Lay nought but dust.—And earth doth call them *martyrs* !
Why, Heaven but claim'd their blood, their lives, and not
The things which grow as tendrils round their hearts ;
No, not their children !

ELMINA.

Mean'st thou ?—know'st thou aught ?—
I cannot utter it—My sons ! my sons !
Is it of them ?—Oh ! wouldst thou speak of them ?

GONZALEZ.

A mother's heart divineth but too well !

ELMINA.

Speak, I adjure thee !—I can bear it all.—
Where are my children ?

GONZALEZ.

In the Moorish camp
Whose lines have girt the city.

XIMENA.

But they live ?
—All is not lost, my mother !

ELMINA.

Say, they live.

GONZALEZ.

Elmina, still they live.

ELMINA.

But captives!—They
Whom my fond heart had imaged to itself
Bounding from cliff to cliff amidst the wilds
Where the rock-eagle seem'd not more secure
In its rejoicing freedom!—And my boys
Are captives with the Moor!—Oh! how was this?

GONZALEZ.

Alas! our brave Alphonso, in the pride
Of boyish daring, left our mountain-halls,
With his young brother, eager to behold
The face of noble war. Thence on their way
Were the rash wanderers captured.

ELMINA.

'Tis enough.

—And when shall they be ransomed?

GONZALEZ.

There is asked

A ransom far too high.

ELMINA.

What! have we wealth
Which might redeem a monarch, and our sons
The while wear fetters?—Take thou all for them,

And we will cast our worthless grandeur from us,
As 'twere a cumbrous robe !—Why, *thou* art one,
To whose high nature pomp hath ever been
But as the plumage to a warrior's helm,
Worn or thrown off as lightly. And for me,
Thou knowest not how serenely I could take
The peasant's lot upon me, so my heart,
Amidst its deep affections undisturb'd,
May dwell in silence.

XIMENA.

Father ! doubt thou not
But we will bind ourselves to poverty,
With glad devotedness, if this, but this,
May win them back.—Distrust us not, my father !
We can bear all things.

GONZALEZ.

Can ye bear disgrace ?

XIMENA.

We were not *born* for this.

GONZALEZ.

No, thou sayst well !
Hold to that lofty faith.—My wife, my child !
Hath earth no treasures richer than the gems
Torn from her secret caverns ?—If by them

Chains may be riven, then let the captive spring
Rejoicing to the light !—But he, for whom
Freedom and life may but be won with shame,
Hath nought to do, save fearlessly to fix
His steadfast look on the majestic heavens,
And proudly die !

ELMINA.

Gonzalez, *who* must die ?

GONZALEZ (*hurriedly*).

They on whose lives a fearful price is set,
But to be paid by treason !—Is 't enough ?
Or must I yet seek words ?

ELMINA.

That look saith more !

Thou canst not mean——

GONZALEZ.

I do ! why dwells there not
Power in a glance to speak it ?—They must die !
They—must their names be told—*Our sons* must die
Unless I yield the city !

XIMENA.

Oh ! look up !

My mother, sink not thus !—Until the grave
Shut from our sight its victims, there is hope.

ELMINA (*in a low voice*).

Whose knell was in the breeze?—No, no, not *theirs* !
Whose was the blessed voice that spoke of hope ?
—And there *is* hope !—I will not be subdued—
I will not hear a whisper of despair !
For Nature is all-powerful, and her breath
Moves like a quickening spirit o'er the depths
Within a father's heart.—Thou too, Gonzalez,
Wilt tell me there is hope !

GONZALEZ (*solemnly*).

Hope but in Him
Who bade the patriarch lay his fair young son
Bound on the shrine of sacrifice, and when
The bright steel quiver'd in the father's hand
Just raised to strike, sent forth his awful voice
Through the still clouds, and on the breathless air,
Commanding to withhold !—Earth has no hope,
It rests with Him.

ELMINA.

Thou canst not tell me this !
Thou father of my sons, within whose hands
Doth lie thy children's fate.

GONZALEZ.

If there have been

Men in whose bosoms Nature's voice hath made
Its accents as the solitary sound
Of an o'erpowering torrent, silencing
Th' austere and yet divine remonstrances
Whisper'd by faith and honour, lift thy hands,
And, to that Heaven, which arms the brave with strength,
Pray, that the father of thy sons may ne'er
Be thus found wanting !

ELMINA.

Then their doom is seal'd !
Thou wilt not save thy children ?

GONZALEZ.

Hast thou cause,
Wife of my youth ! to deem it lies within
The bounds of possible things, that I should link
My name to that word—*traitor* ?—They that sleep
On their proud battle-fields, thy sires and mine,
Died not for this !

ELMINA.

Oh, cold and hard of heart !
Thou shouldst be born for empire, since thy soul
Thus lightly from all human bonds can free
Its haughty flight !—Men ! men ! too much is yours
Of vantage ; ye, that with a sound, a breath,

A shadow, thus can fill the desolate space
Of rooted up affections, o'er whose void
Our yearning hearts must wither !—So it is,
Dominion must be won !—Nay, leave me not—
My heart is bursting, and I *must* be heard !
Heaven hath given power to mortal agony
As to the elements in their hour of might
And mastery o'er creation !—Who shall dare
To mock that fearful strength ?—I *must* be heard !
Give me my sons !

GONZALEZ.

That they may live to hide
With covering hands th' indignant flush of shame
On their young brows, when men shall speak of him
They call'd their father !—Was the oath, whereby,
On th' altar of my faith, I bound myself,
With an unswerving spirit to maintain
This free and christian city for my God,
And for my king, a writing traced on sand ?
That passionate tears should wash it from the earth,
Or e'en the life-drops of a bleeding heart
Efface it, as a billow sweeps away
The last light vessel's wake ?—Then never more
Let man's deep vows be trusted !—though enforced

By all th' appeals of high remembrances,
And silent claims o' th' sepulchres, wherein
His fathers with their stainless glory sleep,
On their good swords ! Think'st thou *I* feel no pangs ?
He that hath given me sons, doth know the heart
Whose treasure she recalls.—Of this no more.
'Tis vain. I tell thee that th' inviolate cross
Still, from our ancient temples, must look up
Through the blue heavens of Spain, though at its foot
I perish, with my race. Thou *darest* not ask
That I, the son of warriors—men who died
To fix it on that proud supremacy—
Should tear the sign of our victorious faith,
From its high place of sunbeams, for the Moor
In impious joy to trample !

ELMINA.

Scorn me not
In mine extreme of misery !—Thou art strong—
Thy heart is not as mine.—My brain grows wild ;
I know not what I ask !—And yet 'twere but
Anticipating fate—since it must fall,
That cross *must* fall at last ! There is no power,
No hope within this city of the grave,
To keep its place on high. Her sultry air

Breathes heavily of death, her warriors sink
Beneath their ancient banners, ere the Moor
Hath bent his bow against them ; for the shaft
Of pestilence flies more swiftly to its mark,
Than the arrow of the desert. Ev'n the skies
O'erhang the desolate splendour of her domes
With an ill omen's aspect, shaping forth,
From the dull clouds, wild menacing forms and signs
Foreboding ruin. *Man* might be withstood,
But who shall cope with famine and disease,
When leagued with armed foes ?—Where now the aid,
Where the long-promised lances of Castile ?
—We are forsaken, in our utmost need,
By heaven and earth forsaken !

GONZALEZ.

If this must be,
(And yet I will not deem it) we must fall
As men that in severe devotedness
Have chosen their part, and bound themselves to death,
Through high conviction that their suffering land,
By the free blood of martyrdom alone,
Shall call deliverance down.

ELMINA.

Oh ! I have stood

Beside thee through the beating storms of life,
With the true heart of unrepining love,
As the poor peasant's mate doth cheerily,
In the parch'd vineyard, or the harvest-field,
Bearing her part, sustain with him the heat
And burden of the day ;—But now the hour,
The heavy hour is come, when human strength
Sinks down, a toil-worn pilgrim, in the dust,
Owning that woe is mightier !—Spare me yet
This bitter cup, my husband !—Let not her,
The mother of the lovely, sit and mourn
In her unpeopled home, a broken stem,
O'er its fallen roses dying !

GONZALEZ.

Urge me not,
Thou that through all sharp conflicts hast been found
Worthy a brave man's love, oh ! urge me not
To guilt, which through the midst of blinding tears,
In its own hues thou seest not !—Death may scarce
Bring aught like this !

ELMINA.

All, all thy gentle race,
The beautiful beings that around thee grew,
Creatures of sunshine ! Wilt thou doom them all ?

—She too, thy daughter—doth her smile unmark'd
Pass from thee, with its radiance, day by day?
Shadows are gathering round her—seest thou not?
The misty dimness of the spoiler's breath
Hangs o'er her beauty, and the face which made
The summer of our hearts, now doth but send,
With every glance, deep bodings through the soul,
Telling of early fate.

GONZALEZ.

I see a change
Far nobler on her brow!—She is as one,
Who, at the trumpet's sudden call, hath risen
From the gay banquet, and in scorn cast down
The wine-cup, and the garland, and the lute
Of festal hours, for the good spear and helm,
Beseeming sterner tasks.—Her eye hath lost
The beam which laugh'd upon th' awakening heart,
E'en as morn breaks o'er earth. But far within
Its full dark orb, a light hath sprung, whose source
Lies deeper in the soul.—And let the torch
Which but illumed the glittering pageant, fade!
The altar-flame, i' th' sanctuary's recess,
Burns quenchless, being of heaven!—She hath put on
Courage, and faith, and generous constancy,

Ev'n as a breastplate.—Aye, men look on her,
As she goes forth serenely to her tasks,
Binding the warrior's wounds, and bearing fresh
Cool draughts to fever'd lips ; they look on her,
Thus moving in her beautiful array
Of gentle fortitude, and bless the fair
Majestic vision, and unmurmuring turn
Unto their heavy toils.

ELMINA.

And seest thou not
In that high faith and strong collectedness,
A fearful inspiration?—*They* have cause
To tremble, who behold th' unearthly light
Of high, and, it may be, prophetic thought,
Investing youth with grandeur!—From the grave
It rises, on whose shadowy brink thy child
Waits but a father's hand to snatch her back
Into the laughing sunshine.—Kneel with me,
Ximena, kneel beside me, and implore
That which a deeper, more prevailing voice
Than ours doth ask, and will not be denied ;
—His children's lives !

XIMENA.

Alas ! this may not be,
Mother!—I cannot. [*Exit* XIMENA.

GONZALEZ.

My heroic child !

—A terrible sacrifice thou claim'st, O God !
From creatures in whose agonizing hearts
Nature is strong as death !

ELMINA.

Is 't thus in thine ?

Away !—what time is given thee to resolve
On ?—what I cannot utter !—Speak ! thou know'st
Too well what I would say.

GONZALEZ.

Until—ask not !

The time is brief.

ELMINA.

Thou saidst—I heard not right—

GONZALEZ.

The time is brief.

ELMINA.

What ! must we burst all ties
Wherewith the thrilling chords of life are twined ;
And, for this task's fulfilment, can it be
That man, in his cold heartlessness, hath dared
To number and to mete us forth the sands
Of hours, nay, moments ?—Why, the sentenced wretch,

He on whose soul there rests a brother's blood
Pour'd forth in slumber, is allow'd more time
To wean his turbulent passions from the world
His presence doth pollute !—It is not thus !
We must have Time to school us.

GONZALEZ.

We have but
To bow the head in silence, when Heaven's voice
Calls back the things we love.

ELMINA.

Love ! love !—there are soft smiles and gentle words,
And there are faces, skilful to put on
The look we trust in—and 'tis mockery all !
—A faithless mist, a desert-vapour, wearing
The brightness of clear waters, thus to cheat
The thirst that semblance kindled !—There is none,
In all this cold and hollow world, no fount
Of deep, strong, deathless love, save that within
A mother's heart.—It is but pride, wherewith
To his fair son the father's eye doth turn,
Watching his growth. Aye, on the boy he looks,
The bright glad creature springing in his path,
But as the heir of his great name, the young
And stately tree, whose rising strength ere long

Shall bear his trophies well.—And this is love !
This is *man's* love !—What marvel ?—*you* ne'er made
Your breast the pillow of his infancy,
While to the fulness of your heart's glad heavings
His fair cheek rose and fell ; and his bright hair
Waved softly to your breath !—*You* ne'er kept watch
Beside him, till the last pale star had set,
And morn, all dazzling, as in triumph, broke
On your dim weary eye ; not *yours* the face
Which, early faded through fond care for him,
Hung o'er his sleep, and, duly as heaven's light,
Was there to greet his wakening ! *You* ne'er smooth'd
His couch, ne'er sung him to his rosy rest,
Caught his least whisper, when his voice from yours
Had learn'd soft utterance ; press'd your lip to his,
When fever parch'd it ; hush'd his wayward cries,
With patient, vigilant, never-wearied love !
No ! these are *woman's* tasks !—In these her youth,
And bloom of cheek, and buoyancy of heart,
Steal from her all unmark'd !—My boys ! my boys !
Hath vain affection borne with all for this ?
—Why were ye given me ?

GONZALEZ.

Is there strength in man
Thus to endure ?—That thou couldst read, through all

Its depths of silent agony, the heart

Thy voice of woe doth rend !

ELMINA.

Thy heart !—*thy* heart !—Away ! it feels not *now* !

But an hour comes to tame the mighty man

Unto the infant's weakness ; nor shall Heaven

Spare you that bitter chastening !—May you live

To be alone, when loneliness doth seem

Most heavy to sustain !—For me, my voice

Of prayer and fruitless weeping shall be soon

With all forgotten sounds ; my quiet place

Low with my lovely ones, and we shall sleep,

Though kings lead armies o'er us, we shall sleep,

Wrapt in earth's covering mantle !—you the while

Shall sit within your vast, forsaken halls,

And hear the wild and melancholy winds

Moan through their drooping banners, never more

To wave above your race. Aye, then call up

Shadows—dim phantoms from ancestral tombs,

But all—all *glorious*—conquerors, chieftains, kings—

To people that cold void !—And when the strength

From your right arm hath melted, when the blast

Of the shrill clarion gives your heart no more

A fiery wakening ; if at last you pine

For the glad voices, and the bounding steps,

Once through your home re-echoing, and the clasp
Of twining arms, and all the joyous light
Of eyes that laugh'd with youth, and made your board
A place of sunshine ;—When those days are come,
Then, in your utter desolation, turn
To the cold world, the smiling, faithless world,
Which hath swept past you long, and bid it quench
Your soul's deep thirst with *fame !* immortal *fame !*
Fame to the sick of heart !—a gorgeous robe,
A crown of victory, unto him that dies
I' th' burning waste, for water !

GONZALEZ.

This from *thee !*

Now the last drop of bitterness is pour'd.

Elmina—I forgive thee !

[*Exit* ELMINA.]

Aid me, Heaven !

From whom alone is power !—Oh ! thou hast set

Duties, so stern of aspect, in my path,

They almost, to my startled gaze, assume

The hue of things less hallow'd ! Men have sunk

Unblamed beneath such trials !—Doth not He

Who made us know the limits of our strength ?

My wife ! my sons !—Away ! I must not pause

To give my heart one moment's mastery thus !

[*Exit* GONZALEZ.]

Scene—The Aisle of a Gothic Church.

HERNANDEZ, GARCIAS, *and others.*

HERNANDEZ.

The rites are closed. Now, valiant men, depart,
Each to his place—I may not say, of rest ;
Your faithful vigils for your sons may win
What must not be your own. Ye are as those
Who sow, in peril and in care, the seed
Of the fair tree, beneath whose stately shade
They may not sit. But bless'd be they who toil
For after days !—All high and holy thoughts
Be with you, warriors, through the lingering hours
Of the night-watch !

GARCIAS.

Aye, father! we have need
Of high and holy thoughts, wherewith to fence
Our hearts against despair. Yet have I been
From youth a son of war. The stars have look'd
A thousand times upon my couch of heath,
Spread 'midst the wild sierras, by some stream

Whose dark-red waves look'd e'en as though their source
Lay not in rocky caverns, but the veins
Of noble hearts ; while many a knightly crest
Roll'd with them to the deep. And in the years
Of my long exile and captivity,
With the fierce Arab, I have watch'd beneath
The still, pale shadow of some lonely palm,
At midnight, in the desert ; while the wind
Swell'd with the lion's roar, and heavily
The fearfulness and might of solitude
Press'd on my weary heart.

HERNANDEZ (*thoughtfully*).

Thou little know'st
Of what is solitude !—I tell thee, those
For whom—in earth's remotest nook—howe'er
Divided from their path by chain on chain
Of mighty mountains, and the amplitude
Of rolling seas—there beats one human heart,
There breathes one being unto whom their name
Comes with a thrilling and a gladdening sound
Heard o'er the din of life ! are not alone !
Not on the deep, nor in the wild, alone ;
For there is that on earth with which they hold
A brotherhood of soul !—Call *him* alone,

Who stands shut out from this !—And let not those
Whose homes are bright with sunshine and with love,
Put on the insolence of happiness,
Glorying in that proud lot !—A lonely hour
Is on its way to each, to all ; for Death
Knows no companionship.

GARCIAS.

I have look'd on Death
In field and storm and flood. But never yet
Hath aught weigh'd down my spirit to a mood
Of sadness, dreaming o'er dark auguries,
Like this, our watch by midnight. Fearful things
Are gathering round us. Death upon the earth,
Omens in Heaven !—The summer-skies put forth
No clear bright stars above us, but at times,
Catching some comet's fiery hue of wrath,
Marshal their clouds to armies, traversing
Heaven with the rush of meteor-steeds, the array
Of spears and banners, tossing like the pines
Of Pyrenean forests, when the storm
Doth sweep the mountains.

HERNANDEZ.

Aye, last night I too
Kept vigil, gazing on the angry heavens ;

And I beheld the meeting and the shock
Of those wild hosts i' th' air, when, as they closed,
A red and sultry mist, like that which mantles
The thunder's path, fell o'er them. Then were flung
Through the dull glare, broad cloudy banners forth,
And chariots seem'd to whirl, and steeds to sink,
Bearing down crested warriors. But all this
Was dim and shadowy ;—then swift darkness rush'd
Down on th' unearthly battle, as the deep
Swept o'er the Egyptian's armament.—I look'd—
And all that fiery field of plumes and spears
Was blotted from Heaven's face !—I look'd again—
And from the brooding mass of cloud leap'd forth
One meteor-sword, which o'er the reddening sea
Shook with strange motion, such as earthquakes give
Unto a rocking citadel !—I beheld,
And yet my spirit sunk not.

GARCIAS.

Neither deem
That mine hath blench'd.—But these are sights and sounds
To awe the firmest.—Know'st thou what we hear
At midnight from the walls ?—Were 't but the deep
Barbaric horn, or Moorish tambour's peal,
Thence might the warrior's heart catch impulses,

Quickening its fiery currents. But our ears
Are pierced by other tones. We hear the knell
For brave men in their noon of strength cut down,
And the shrill wail of woman, and the dirge
Faint swelling through the streets. Then e'en the air
Hath strange and fitful murmurs of lament,
As if the viewless watchers of the land
Sigh'd on its hollow breezes!—To my soul,
The torrent-rush of battle, with its din
Of trampling steeds and ringing panoply,
Were, after these faint sounds of drooping woe,
As the free sky's glad music unto him
Who leaves a couch of sickness.

HERNANDEZ (*with solemnity*).

If to plunge
In the mid-waves of combat, as they bear
Chargers and spearmen onwards ; and to make
A reckless bosom's front the buoyant mark
On that wild current, for ten thousand arrows ;
If *thus* to dare were valour's noblest aim,
Lightly might fame be won!—but there are things
Which ask a spirit of more exalted pitch,
And courage temper'd with a holier fire !
Well mayst thou say, that these are fearful times,

Therefore be firm, be patient !—There is strength,
And a fierce instinct, e'en in common souls,
To bear up manhood with a stormy joy,
When red swords meet in lightning !—But our task
Is more, and nobler !—We have to endure,
And to keep watch, and to arouse a land,
And to defend an altar !—If we fall,
So that our blood make but the millionth part
Of Spain's great ransom, we may count it joy
To die upon her bosom, and beneath
The banner of her faith !—Think but on this,
And gird your hearts with silent fortitude,
Suffering, yet hoping all things—Fare ye well.

GARCIAS.

Father, farewell. [*Exeunt GARCIAS and his followers.*]

HERNANDEZ.

These men have earthly ties
And bondage on their natures !—To the cause
Of God, and Spain's revenge, they bring but half
Their energies and hopes. But he whom Heaven
Hath call'd to be th' awakener of a land,
Should have his soul's affections all absorbed
In that majestic purpose, and press on
To its fulfilment, as a mountain-born
And mighty stream, with all its vassal-rills,

Sweeps proudly to the ocean, pausing not
To dally with the flowers.

Hark ! What quick step
Comes hurrying through the gloom at this dead hour ?

ELMINA enters.

ELMINA.

Are not all hours as one to misery ?—Why
Should *she* take note of time, for whom the day
And night have lost their blessed attributes
Of sunshine and repose ?

HERNANDEZ.

I know thy griefs ;
But there are trials for the noble heart
Wherein its own deep fountains must supply
All it can hope of comfort. Pity's voice
Comes with vain sweetness to th' unheeding ear
Of anguish, e'en as music heard afar
On the green shore, by him who perishes
'Midst rocks and eddying waters.

ELMINA.

Think thou not
I sought thee but for pity. I am come
For that which grief is privileged to demand

With an imperious claim, from all whose form,
Whose human form, doth seal them unto suffering !
Father ! I ask thine *aid*.

HERNANDEZ.

There is no aid
For thee or for thy children, but with Him
Whose presence is around us in the cloud,
As in the shining and the glorious light.

ELMINA.

There is no aid !—Art thou a man of God ?
Art thou a man of sorrow—(for the world
Doth call thee such)—and hast thou not been taught
By God and sorrow—mighty as they are,
To own the claims of misery ?

HERNANDEZ.

Is there power
With me to save thy sons ?—Implore of Heaven !

ELMINA.

Doth not Heaven work its purposes by man ?
I tell thee, *thou* canst save them !—Art thou not
Gonzalez' counsellor !—Unto him thy words
Are e'en as oracles——

HERNANDEZ.

And therefore ?—Speak !
The noble daughter of Pelayo's line

Hath nought to ask, unworthy of the name
Which is a nation's heritage.—Dost thou shrink ?

ELMINA.

Have pity on me, father !—I must speak
That, from the thought of which, but yesterday,
I had recoiled in scorn !—But this is past.
Oh ! we grow humble in our agonies,
And to the dust—their birth-place—bow the heads
That wore the crown of glory !—I am weak—
My chastening is far more than I can bear.

HERNANDEZ.

These are no times for weakness. On our hills
The ancient cedars, in their gather'd might,
Are battling with the tempest ; and the flower
Which cannot meet its driving blast must die.
—But thou hast drawn thy nurture from a stem
Unwont to bend or break.—Lift thy proud head,
Daughter of Spain !—What wouldst thou with thy lord ?

ELMINA.

Look not upon me thus !—I have no power
To tell thee. Take thy keen disdainful eye
Off from my soul !—What ! am I sunk to this ?
I, whose blood sprung from heroes !—How my sons
Will scorn the mother that would bring disgrace

On their majestic line !—My sons ! my sons !
—Now is all else forgotten !—I had once
A babe that in the early spring-time lay
Sickening upon my bosom, till at last,
When earth's young flowers were opening to the sun,
Death sunk on his meek eyelid, and I deem'd
All sorrow light to mine !—But now the fate
Of all my children seems to brood above me
In the dark thunder-clouds !—Oh ! I have power
And voice unfaltering now to speak my prayer
And my last lingering hope, that thou shouldst win
The father to relent, to save his sons !

HERNANDEZ.

By yielding up the city ?

ELMINA.

Rather say

By meeting that which gathers close upon us
Perchance one day the sooner !—Is 't not so ?
Must we not yield at last ?—How long shall man
Array his single breast against disease,
And famine, and the sword ?

HERNANDEZ.

How long ?—While he,
Who shadows forth his power more gloriously

In the high deeds and sufferings of the soul,
 Than in the circling heavens, with all their stars,
 Or the far-sounding deep, doth send abroad
 A spirit, which takes affliction for its mate,
 In the good cause, with solemn joy !—How long ?
 —And who art *thou*, that, in the littleness
 Of thine own selfish purpose, would'st set bounds
 To the free current of all noble thought
 And generous action, bidding its bright waves
 Be stay'd, and flow no further ?—But the Power
 Whose interdict is laid on seas and orbs,
 To chain them in from wandering, hath assign'd
 No limits unto that which man's high strength
 Shall, through its aid, achieve !

ELMINA.

Oh there are times,
 When *all* that hopeless courage can achieve
 But sheds a mournful beauty o'er the fate
 Of those who die in vain.

HERNANDEZ.

Who dies in vain
 Upon his country's war-fields, and within
 The shadow of her altars ?—Feeble heart !
 I tell thee that the voice of noble blood,

Thus pour'd for faith and freedom, hath a tone
Which, from the night of ages, from the gulf
Of death, shall burst, and make its high appeal
Sound unto earth and heaven ! Aye, let the land,
Whose sons, through centuries of woe, have striven,
And perish'd by her temples, sink awhile,
Borne down in conflict !—But immortal seed
Deep, by heroic suffering, hath been sown
On all her ancient hills ; and generous hope
Knows that the soil, in its good time, shall yet
Bring forth a glorious harvest !—Earth receives
Not one red drop, from faithful hearts, in vain.

ELMINA.

Then it must be !—And ye will make those lives,
Those bright young lives, an offering—to retard
Our doom one day !

HERNANDEZ.

The mantle of that day
May wrap the fate of Spain !

ELMINA.

What led me here ?

Why did I turn to *thee* in my despair ?
Love hath no ties upon thee ; what had I
To hope from *thee*, thou lone and childless man !

Go to thy silent home !—there no young voice
Shall bid thee welcome, no light footstep spring
Forth at the sound of thine !—What knows thy heart ?

HERNANDEZ.

Woman ! how dar'st thou taunt me with my woes ?
Thy children too shall perish, and I say
It shall be well !—Why tak'st thou thought for them ?
Wearing thy heart, and wasting down thy life
Unto its dregs, and making night thy time
Of care yet more intense, and casting health,
Unpriz'd, to melt away, i' th' bitter cup
Thou minglest for thyself ?—Why, what hath earth
To pay thee back for this ?—Shall they not live
(If the sword spare them now) to prove how soon
All love may be forgotten ?—Years of thought,
Long faithful watchings, looks of tenderness,
That changed not, though to change be this world's law ?
Shall they not flush thy cheek with shame, whose blood
Marks, e'en like branding iron ?—to thy sick heart
Make death a want, as sleep to weariness ?
Doth not all hope end thus ?—or e'en at best,
Will they not leave thee ?—far from thee seek room
For th' overflowings of their fiery souls,
On life's wide ocean ?—Give the bounding steed,

Or the wing'd bark to youth, that his free course
May be o'er hills and seas ; and weep thou not
In thy forsaken home, for the bright world
Lies all before him, and be sure he wastes
No thought on thee !

ELMINA.

Not so ! it is not so !
Thou dost but torture me ! *My* sons are kind,
And brave, and gentle.

HERNANDEZ.

Others too have worn
The semblance of all good. Nay, stay thee yet ;
I will be calm, and thou shalt learn how earth,
The fruitful in all agonies, hath woes
Which far outweigh thine own.

ELMINA.

It may not be !
Whose grief is like a mother's for her sons ?

HERNANDEZ.

My son lay stretch'd upon his battle-bier,
And there were hands wrung o'er him, which had caught
Their hue from his young blood !

ELMINA.

What tale is this !

HERNANDEZ.

Read you no records in this mien, of things
Whose traces on man's aspect are not such
As the breeze leaves on water?—Lofty birth,
War, peril, power?—Affliction's hand is strong,
If it erase the haughty characters
They grave so deep!—I have not always been
That which I am. The name I bore is not
Of those which perish!—I was once a chief—
A warrior!—nor as now, a lonely man!
I was a father!

ELMINA.

Then thy heart can *feel*!
Thou wilt have pity!

HERNANDEZ.

Should I pity *thee*?
Thy sons will perish gloriously—their blood——

ELMINA.

Their blood! my children's blood!—Thou speak'st as
'twere
Of casting down a wine-cup, in the mirth
And wantonness of feasting!—My fair boys!
—Man! hast *thou* been a father?

HERNANDEZ.

Let them die !

Let them die *now*, thy children ! so thy heart
Shall wear their beautiful image all undimm'd,
Within it, to the last ! Nor shalt thou learn
The bitter lesson, of what worthless dust
Are framed the idols, whose false glory binds
Earth's fetter on our souls !—Thou think'st it much
To mourn the early dead ; but there are tears
Heavy with deeper anguish ! We endow
Those whom we love, in our fond passionate blindness,
With power upon our souls, too absolute
To be a mortal's trust ! Within their hands
We lay the flaming sword, whose stroke alone
Can reach our hearts, and *they* are merciful,
As they are strong, that wield it not to pierce us !
—Aye, fear them, fear the loved !—Had I but wept
O'er my son's grave, as o'er a babe's, where tears
Are as spring dew-drops, glittering in the sun,
And brightening the young verdure, *I* might still
Have loved and trusted !

ELMINA (*disdainfully*).

But he fell in war '

And hath not glory medicine in her cup
For the brief pangs of nature ?

HERNANDEZ.

Glory !—Peace,

And listen !—By my side the stripling grew,
Last of my line. I rear'd him to take joy
I' th' blaze of arms, as eagles train their young
To look upon the day-king !—His quick blood
Ev'n to his boyish cheek would mantle up,
When the heavens rang with trumpets, and his eye
Flash with the spirit of a race whose deeds—
But this availeth not !—Yet he *was* brave.
I've seen him clear himself a path in fight
As lightning through a forest, and his plume
Waved like a torch, above the battle-storm,
The soldier's guide, when princely crests had sunk,
And banners were struck down.—Around my steps
Floated his fame, like music, and I lived
But in the lofty sound. But when my heart
In one frail ark had ventur'd all, when most
He seem'd to stand between my soul and heaven,
—Then came the thunder-stroke !

ELMINA.

'Tis ever thus !

And the unquiet and foreboding sense
That thus 'twill ever be, doth link itself
Darkly with all deep love !—He died ?

HERNANDEZ.

Not so !

—Death ! Death !—Why, earth should be a paradise,
 To make that name so fearful !—Had he died,
 With his young fame about him for a shroud,
 I had not learn'd the might of agony,
 To bring proud natures low !—No ! he fell off—
 —Why do I tell thee this ?—What right hast *thou*
 To learn how pass'd the glory from my house ?
 Yet listen !—He forsook me !—He, that was
 As mine own soul, forsook me ! trampled o'er
 The ashes of his sires !—Aye, leagued himself
 E'en with the infidel, the curse of Spain,
 And, for the dark eye of a Moorish maid,
 Abjured his faith, his God !—Now, talk of death !

ELMINA.

Oh ! I can pity thee——

HERNANDEZ.

There 's more to hear.

I braced the corslet o'er my heart's deep wound,
 And cast my troubled spirit on the tide
 Of war and high events, whose stormy waves
 Might bear it up from sinking ;——

ELMINA.

And ye met

No more ?

HERNANDEZ.

Be still !—We did !—we met *once more*.

God had his own high purpose to fulfil,
Or think'st thou that the sun in his bright heaven
Had look'd upon such things ?—We met *once more*.
—That was an hour to leave its lightning-mark
Sear'd upon brain and bosom !—there had been
Combat on Ebro's banks, and when the day
Sank in red clouds, it faded from a field
Still held by Moorish lances. Night closed round,
A night of sultry darkniess, in the shadow
Of whose broad wing, ev'n unto death I strove
Long with a turban'd champion ; but my sword
Was heavy with God's vengeance—and prevail'd.
He fell—my heart exulted—and I stood
In gloomy triumph o'er him—Nature gave
No sign of horror, for 'twas Heaven's decree !
He strove to speak—but I had done the work
Of wrath too well—yet in his last deep moan
A dreadful something of familiar sound
Came o'er my shuddering sense.—The moon look'd forth,

And I beheld—speak not!—’twas he—my son!
My boy lay dying there! He raised one glance,
And knew me—for he sought with feeble hand
To cover his glazed eyes. A darker veil
Sank o’er them soon.—I will not have thy look
Fix’d on me thus!—Away!

ELMINA.

Thou hast seen this,
Thou hast *done* this, and yet thou liv’st?

HERNANDEZ.

I live!

And know’st thou wherefore?—On my soul there fell
A horror of great darkness, which shut out
All earth, and heaven, and hope. I cast away
The spear and helm, and made the cloister’s shade
The home of my despair. But a deep voice
Came to me through the gloom, and sent its tones
Far through my bosom’s depths. And I awoke,
Aye, as the mountain cedar doth shake off
Its weight of wintry snow, e’en so I shook
Despondence from my soul, and knew myself
Seal’d by that blood wherewith my hands were dyed,
And set apart, and fearfully mark’d out
Unto a mighty task!—To rouse the soul

Of Spain, as from the dead ; and to lift up
The cross, her sign of victory, on the hills,
Gathering her sons to battle !—And my voice
Must be as freedom's trumpet on the winds,
From Roncesvalles to the blue sea-waves
Where Calpe looks on Afric ; till the land
Have fill'd her cup of vengeance !—Ask me *now*
To yield the Christian city, that its fanes
May rear the minaret in the face of Heaven!
—But death shall have a bloodier vintage-feast
Ere that day come !

ELMINA.

I ask thee this no more,
For I am hopeless now.—But yet one boon—
Hear me, by all thy woes !—Thy voice hath power
Through the wide city—here I cannot rest :—
Aid me to pass the gates !

HERNANDEZ.

And wherefore ?

ELMINA.

Thou,

That *wert* a father, and art now—alone !
Canst *thou* ask ‘ wherefore ? ’—Ask the wretch whose sands
Have not an hour to run, whose failing limbs

Have but one earthly journey to perform,
Why, on his pathway to the place of death,
Aye, when the very axe is glistening cold
Upon his dizzy sight, his pale, parch'd lip
Implores a cup of water?—Why, the stroke
Which trembles o'er him in itself shall bring
Oblivion of all wants, yet who denies
Nature's last prayer?—I tell thee that the thirst
Which burns my spirit up is agony
To be endured no more!—And I *must* look
Upon my children's faces, I must hear
Their voices, ere they perish!—But hath Heaven
Decreed that they *must* perish?—Who shall say
If in yon Moslem camp there beats no heart
Which prayers and tears may melt?

HERNANDEZ.

There!—with the Moor!
Let him fill up the measure of his guilt!
—'Tis madness all!—How wouldst thou pass th' array
Of armed foes?

ELMINA.

Oh! free doth sorrow pass,
Free and unquestion'd, through a suffering world! •

HERNANDEZ.

This must not be. Enough of woe is laid
E'en now, upon thy lord's heroic soul,
For man to bear, unsinking. Press thou not
Too heavily th' o'erburthen'd heart.—Away !
Bow down the knee, and send thy prayers for strength
Up to Heaven's gate.—Farewell !

[*Exit* HERNANDEZ.]

ELMINA.

Are all men thus ?

—Why, wer't not better they should fall e'en now
Than live to shut their hearts, in haughty scorn,
Against the sufferer's pleadings ?—But no, no !
Who can be like *this* man, that slew his son,
Yet wears his life still proudly, and a soul
Untamed upon his brow ?

(*After a pause.*)

There's one, whose arms
Have borne my children in their infancy,
And on whose knees they sported, and whose hand
Hath led them oft—a vassal of their sire's ;
And I will seek him : he may lend me aid,
When all beside pass on.

DIRGE HEARD WITHOUT.

Thou to thy rest art gone,
High heart ! and what are we,
While o'er our heads the storm sweeps on,
That we should mourn for thee ?

Free grave and peaceful bier
To the buried son of Spain !
To those that live, the lance and spear,
And well if not the chain !

Be *theirs* to weep the dead
As they sit beneath their vines,
Whose flowery land hath borne no tread
Of spoilers o'er its shrines !

Thou hast thrown off the load
Which we must yet sustain,
And pour our blood where *thine* hath flow'd,
Too blest if not in vain !

We give thee holy rite,
Slow knell, and chaunted strain !

—For those that fall to-morrow night,
May be left no funeral-train.

Again, when trumpets wake,
We must brace our armour on ;
But a deeper note *thy* sleep must break—
—Thou to thy rest art gone !

Happier in *this* than all,
That, now thy race is run,
Upon thy name no stain may fall,
Thy work hath well been done !

ELMINA.

“Thy work hath well been done !”—so thou mayst rest !
—There is a solemn lesson in those words—
But now I may not pause.

[*Exit* ELMINA.]

Scene—A Street in the City.

HERNANDEZ, GONZALEZ.

HERNANDEZ.

Would they not hear ?

GONZALEZ.

They heard, as one that stands
By the cold grave which hath but newly closed
O'er his last friend doth hear some passer-by,
Bid him be comforted !—Their hearts have died
Within them !—We must perish, not as those
That fall when battle's voice doth shake the hills,
And peal through Heaven's great arch, but silently,
And with a wasting of the spirit down,
A quenching, day by day, of some bright spark,
Which lit us on our toils !—Reproach me not ;
My soul is darken'd with a heavy cloud—
—Yet fear not I shall yield !

HERNANDEZ.

Breathe not the word,
Save in proud scorn !—Each bitter day, o'erpass'd

By slow endurance, is a triumph won
For Spain's red cross. And be of trusting heart !
A few brief hours, and those that turn'd away
In cold despondence, shrinking from your voice,
May crowd around their leader, and demand
To be array'd for battle. We must watch
For the swift impulse, and await its time,
As the bark waits the ocean's. You have chosen
To kindle up their souls, an hour, perchance,
When they were weary ; they had cast aside
Their arms to slumber ; or a knell, just then
With its deep hollow tone, had made the blood
Creep shuddering through their veins ; or they had caught
A glimpse of some new meteor, and shaped forth
Strange omens from its blaze.

GONZALEZ.

Alas ! the cause
Lies deeper in their misery !—I have seen,
In my night's course through this beleaguer'd city
Things, whose remembrance doth not pass away
As vapours from the mountains.—There were some,
That sat beside their dead, with eyes, wherein
Grief had ta'en place of sight, and shut out all
But its own ghastly object. To my voice

Some answer'd with a fierce and bitter laugh,
As men whose agonies were made to pass
The bounds of sufferance, by some reckless word,
Dropt from the light of spirit.—Others lay—
—Why should I tell thee, father ! how despair
Can bring the lofty brow of manhood down
Unto the very dust ?—And yet for this,
Fear not that I embrace my doom—Oh God !
That 'twere *my* doom alone !—with less of fix'd
And solemn fortitude.—Lead on, prepare
The holiest rites of faith, that I by them
Once more may consecrate my sword, my life,
—But what are these ?—Who hath not dearer lives
Twined with his own ?—I shall be lonely soon—
Childless !—Heaven wills it so. Let us begone.
Perchance before the shrine my heart may beat
With a less troubled motion.

[*Exeunt* GONZALEZ and HERNANDEZ.]

Scene—A Tent in the Moorish Camp.

ABDULLAH, ALPHONSO, CARLOS.

ABDULLAH.

These are bold words : but hast thou look'd on death,
Fair stripling ?—On thy cheek and sunny brow
Scarce fifteen summers of their laughing course
Have left light traces. If thy shaft hath pierced
The ibex of the mountains, if thy step
Hath climb'd some eagle's nest, and thou hast made
His nest thy spoil, 'tis much !—And fear'st thou not
The leader of the mighty ?

ALPHONSO.

I have been
Rear'd amongst fearless men, and 'midst the rocks
And the wild hills, whereon my fathers fought
And won their battles. There are glorious tales
Told of their deeds, and I have learn'd them all.
How should I fear thee, Moor ?

ABDULLAH.

So, thou hast seen
Fields, where the combat's roar hath died away

Into the whispering breeze, and where wild flowers
Bloom o'er forgotten graves!—But know'st thou aught
Of those, where sword from crossing sword strikes fire,
And leaders are borne down, and rushing steeds
Trample the life from out the mighty hearts
That rul'd the storm so late?—Speak not of death,
Till thou hast look'd on such.

ALPHONSO.

I was not born
A shepherd's son, to dwell with pipe and crook,
And peasant-men, amidst the lowly vales;
Instead of ringing clarions, and bright spears,
And crested knights!—I am of princely race,
And, if my father would have heard my suit,
I tell thee, infidel! that long ere now,
I should have seen how lances meet; and swords
Do the field's work.

ABDULLAH.

Boy! know'st thou there are sights
A thousand times more fearful?—Men may die
Full proudly, when the skies and mountains ring
To battle-horn and tecbir.*—But not all
So pass away in glory. There are those,

* *Tecbir*, the war-cry of the Moors and Arabs.

'Midst the dead silence of pale multitudes,
Led forth in fetters—dost thou mark me, boy ?
To take their last look of th' all-gladdening sun,
And bow, perchance, the stately head of youth,
Unto the death of shame !—Hadst thou seen this——

ALPHONSO (*to CARLOS*).

Sweet brother, God is with us—fear thou not !
We have had heroes for our sires—this man
Should not behold us tremble.

ABDULLAH.

There are means
To tame the loftiest natures. Yet again,
I ask thee, wilt thou, from beneath the walls,
Sue to thy sire for life ; or wouldst thou die,
With this, thy brother ?

ALPHONSO.

Moslem ! on the hills,
Around my fathers's castle, I have heard
The mountain-peasants, as they dress'd the vines,
Or drove the goats, by rock and torrent, home,
Singing their ancient songs ; and these were all
Of the Cid Campeador ; and how his sword
Tizona³ clear'd its way through turban'd hosts,
And captured Afric's kings, and how he won

Valencia from the Moor.⁴—I will not shame
The blood we draw from him !

(A Moorish Soldier enters.)

SOLDIER.

Valencia's lord
Sends messengers, my chief.

ABDULLAH.

Conduct them hither.

*[The Soldier goes out, and re-enters with ELMINA,
disguised, and an Attendant.]*

CARLOS *(springing forward to the Attendant)*.

Oh ! take me hence, Diego ; take me hence
With thee, that I may see my mother's face
At morning, when I wake. Here dark-brow'd men
Frown strangely, with their cruel eyes, upon us.
Take me with thee, for thou art good and kind,
And well I know, thou lov'st me, my Diego !

ABDULLAH.

Peace, boy !—What tidings, Christian, from thy lord ?
Is he grown humbler, doth he set the lives
Of these fair nurslings at a city's worth ?

ALPHONSO *(rushing forward impatiently)*.

Say not, he doth !—Yet wherefore art thou here ?

If it be so—I could weep burning tears
 For very shame !—If this *can* be, return !
 Tell him, of all his wealth, his battle-spoils,
 I will but ask a war-horse and a sword,
 And that beside him in the mountain-chase,
 And in his halls and at his stately feasts,
 My place shall be no more !—but no !—I wrong,
 I wrong my father !—Moor ! believe it not !
 He is a champion of the cross and Spain,
 Sprung from the Cid ;—and I too, I can die
 As a warrior's high-born child !

ELMINA.

Alas ! Alas !

And wouldst thou die, thus early die, fair boy ?
 What hath life done to thee, that thou shouldst cast
 Its flower away, in very scorn of heart,
 Ere yet the blight be come ?

ALPHONSO.

That voice doth sound——

ABDULLAH.

Stranger, who art thou ?—this is mockery ! speak !

ELMINA (*throwing off a mantle and helmet, and embracing her sons*).

My boys ! whom I have rear'd through many hours

Of silent joys and sorrows, and deep thoughts
Untold and unimagined ; let me die
With you, now I have held you to my heart,
And seen once more the faces, in whose light
My soul hath lived for years !

CARLOS.

Sweet mother ! now
Thou shalt not leave us more.

ABDULLAH.

Enough of this !
Woman ! what seek'st thou here ?—How hast thou dared
To front the mighty thus amidst his hosts ?

ELMINA.

Think'st thou there dwells no courage but in breasts
That set their mail against the ringing spears,
When helmets are struck down ?—Thou little know'st
Of nature's marvels !—Chief ! my heart is nerved
To make its way through things which warrior-men,
—Aye, they that master death by field or flood,
Would look on, ere they braved !—I have no thought,
No sense of fear !—Thou'rt mighty ! but a soul
Wound up like mine is mightier, in the power
Of that one feeling, pour'd through all its depths,
Than monarchs with their hosts !—Am I not come
To die with these, my children ?

ABDULLAH.

Doth thy faith
Bid thee do this, fond Christian?—Hast thou not
The means to save them?

ELMINA.

I have prayers, and tears,
And agonies!—and he—my God—the God
Whose hand, or soon or late, doth find its hour
To bow the crested head—hath made these things
Most powerful in a world where all must learn
That one deep language, by the storm call'd forth
From the bruised reeds of earth!—For thee, perchance,
Affliction's chastening lesson hath not yet
Been laid upon thy heart, and thou may'st love
To see the creatures, by its might brought low,
Humbled before thee. [*She throws herself at his feet.*]

Conqueror! I can kneel!

I, that drew birth from princes, bow myself
E'en to thy feet! Call in thy chiefs, thy slaves,
If this will swell thy triumph, to behold
The blood of kings, of heroes, thus abased!
Do this, but spare my sons!

ALPHONSO (*attempting to raise her*).

Thou shouldst not kneel

Unto this infidel !—Rise, rise, my mother !

This sight doth shame our house !

ABDULLAH.

Thou daring boy !

They that in arms have taught thy father's land

How chains are worn, shall school that haughty mien

Unto another language.

ELMINA.

Peace, my son !

Have pity on my heart !—Oh, pardon, Chief !

He is of noble blood !—Hear, hear me yet !

Are there no lives through which the shafts of Heaven

May reach your soul ?—He that loves aught on earth,

Dares far too much, if he be merciless !

Is it for those, whose frail mortality

Must one day strive alone with God and death,

To shut their souls against th' appealing voice

Of nature, in her anguish ?—Warrior ! Man !

To you too, aye, and haply with your hosts,

By thousands and ten thousands marshall'd round,

And your strong armour on, shall come that stroke

Which the lance wards not !—Where shall your high heart

Find refuge then, if in the day of might

Woe hath lain prostrate, bleeding at your feet,

And you have pitied not ?

ABDULLAH.

These are vain words.

ELMINA.

Have you no children ?—fear you not to bring
The lightning on their heads ?—In your own land
Doth no fond mother, from the tents, beneath
Your native palms, look o'er the deserts out,
To greet your homeward step ?—You have not yet
Forgot so utterly her patient love—
—For is not woman's, in all climes, the same ?—
That you should scorn *my* prayer !—Oh Heaven ! his eye
Doth wear no mercy !

ABDULLAH.

Then it mocks you not.

I have swept o'er the mountains of your land,
Leaving my traces, as the visitings
Of storms, upon them !—Shall I now be stay'd !
Know, unto me it were as light a thing,
In this, my course, to quench your children's lives,
As, journeying through a forest, to break off
The young wild branches that obstruct the way
With their green sprays and leaves.

ELMINA.

Are there such hearts

Amongst thy works, oh God ?

ABDULLAH.

Kneel not to me.

Kneel to your lord ! on his resolves doth hang
His children's doom. He may be lightly won
By a few bursts of passionate tears and words.

ELMINA (*rising indignantly*).

Speak not of noble men !—he bears a soul
Stronger than love or death.

ALPHONSO (*with exultation*).

I knew 'twas thus !

He could not fail !

ELMINA.

There is no mercy, none,
On this cold earth !—To strive with such a world,
Hearts should be void of love !—We will go hence,
My children ! we are summon'd. Lay your heads,
In their young radiant beauty, once again
To rest upon this bosom. He that dwells
Beyond the clouds which press us darkly round,
Will yet have pity, and before his face
We three will stand together ! Moslem ! now
Let the stroke fall at once !

ABDULLAH.

'Tis thine own will.

These might e'en yet be spared.

ELMINA.

Thou wilt not spare !

And he beneath whose eye their childhood grew,
And in whose paths they sported, and whose ear
From their first lisping accents caught the sound
Of that word—*Father*—once a name of love—
Is——Men shall call him *stedfast*.

ABDULLAH.

Hath the blast

Of sudden trumpets ne'er at dead of night,
When the land's watchers fear'd no hostile step,
Startled the slumberers from their dreamy world,
In cities, whose heroic lords have been
Stedfast as thine ?

ELMINA.

There 's meaning in thine eye,
More than thy words.

ABDULLAH (*pointing to the city*).

Look to yon towers and walls !

Think you no hearts within their limits pine,
Weary of hopeless warfare, and prepared
To burst the feeble links which bind them still
Unto endurance ?

ELMINA.

Thou hast said too well.

But what of this ?

ABDULLAH.

Then there are those, to whom
The Prophet's armies not as foes would pass
Yon gates, but as deliverers. Might they not
In some still hour, when weariness takes rest,
Be won to welcome us.—Your children's steps
May yet bound lightly through their father's halls !

ALPHONSO (*indignantly*).

Thou treacherous Moor !

ELMINA.

Let me not thus be tried
Beyond all strength, oh Heaven !

ABDULLAH.

Now, 'tis for *thee*,
Thou Christian mother ! on thy sons to pass
The sentence—life or death !—the price is set
On their young blood, and rests within thy hands.

ALPHONSO.

Mother ! thou tremblest !

ABDULLAH.

Hath thy heart resolved ?

ELMINA (*covering her face with her hands*).

My boy's proud eye is on me, and the things
Which rush, in stormy darkness, through my soul,
Shrink from his glance. I cannot answer *here*.

ABDULLAH.

Come forth. We 'll commune elsewhere.

CARLOS (*to his mother*).

Wilt thou go?

Oh ! let me follow thee !

ELMINA.

Mine own fair child !

—Now that thine eyes have pour'd once more on mine
The light of their young smile, and thy sweet voice
Hath sent its gentle music through my soul,
And I have felt the twining of thine arms—
—How shall I leave thee ?

ABDULLAH.

Leave him, as 'twere but
For a brief slumber, to behold his face
At morning, with the sun's.

ALPHONSO.

Thou hast no look
For me, my mother !

ELMINA.

Oh ! that I should live
To say, I *dare* not look on thee !—Farewell,
My first born, fare thee well !

ALPHONSO.

Yet, yet beware !
It were a grief more heavy on thy soul,
That I should blush for thee, than o'er my grave
That thou shouldst proudly weep !

ABDULLAH.

Away ! we trifle here. The night wanes fast.
Come forth !

ELMINA.

One more embrace ! My sons, farewell !

*[Exeunt ABDULLAH with ELMINA and
her Attendant.]*

ALPHONSO.

Hear me yet once, my mother !

Art thou gone ?

But one word more !

[He rushes out, followed by CARLOS.]

Scene—The Garden of a Palace in Valencia.

XIMENA, THERESA.

THERESA.

Stay yet awhile. A purer air doth rove
Here through the myrtles whispering, and the limes,
And shaking sweetness from the orange boughs,
Than waits you in the city.

XIMENA.

There are those
In their last need, and on their bed of death,
At which no hand doth minister but mine,
That wait me in the city. Let us hence.

THERESA.

You have been wont to love the music made
By founts, and rustling foliage, and soft winds,
Breathing of citron-groves. And will you turn
From these to scenes of death ?

XIMENA.

To me the voice
Of summer, whispering through young flowers and leaves,

Now speaks too deep a language ! and of all
Its dreamy and mysterious melodies,
The breathing soul is sadness !—I have felt
That summons through my spirit, after which
The hues of earth are changed, and all her sounds
Seem fraught with secret warnings.—There is cause
That I should bend my footsteps to the scenes
Where Death is busy, taming warrior-hearts,
And pouring winter through the fiery blood,
And fettering the strong arm !—For now no sigh
In the dull air, nor floating cloud in heaven,
No, not the lightest murmur of a leaf,
But of his angel's silent coming bears
Some token to my soul.—But nought of this
Unto my mother !—These are awful hours !
And on their heavy steps, afflictions crowd
With such dark pressure, there is left no room
For one grief more.

THERESA.

Sweet lady, talk not thus !
Your eye this morn doth wear a calmer light,
There's more of life in its clear tremulous ray
Than I have mark'd of late. Nay, go not yet ;
Rest by this fountain, where the laurels dip

Their glossy leaves. A fresher gale doth spring
From the transparent waters, dashing round
Their silvery spray, with a sweet voice of coolness,
O'er the pale glistening marble. 'Twill call up
Faint bloom, if but a moment's, to your cheek.
Rest here, ere you go forth, and I will sing
The melody you love.

THERESA *sings.*

Why is the Spanish maiden's grave
So far from her own bright land ?
The sunny flowers that o'er it wave
Were sown by no kindred hand.

'Tis not the orange-bough that sends
Its breath on the sultry air,
'Tis not the myrtle-stem that bends
To the breeze of evening there !

But the Rose of Sharon's eastern bloom
By the silent dwelling fades,
And none but strangers pass the tomb
Which the Palm of Judah shades.

The lowly Cross, with flowers o'ergrown,
Marks well that place of rest ;
But who hath graved, on its mossy stone,
A sword, a helm, a crest ?

These are the trophies of a chief,
A lord of the axe and spear !
—Some blossom pluck'd, some faded leaf,
Should grace a maiden's bier !

Scorn not her tomb—deny not her
The honours of the brave !
O'er that forsaken sepulchre,
Banner and plume might wave.

She bound the steel, in battle tried,
Her fearless heart above,
And stood with brave men, side by side,
In the strength and faith of love !

That strength prevail'd—that faith was bless'd !
True was the javelin thrown,
Yet pierced it not her warrior's breast,
She met it with her own !

And nobly won, where heroes fell
In arms for the holy shrine,
A death which saved what she loved so well,
And a grave in Palestine.

Then let the Rose of Sharon spread
Its breast to the glowing air,
And the Palm of Judah lift its head,
Green and immortal there !

And let yon grey stone, undefaced,
With its trophy mark the scene,
Telling the pilgrim of the waste,
Where Love and Death have been.

XIMENA.

Those notes were wont to make my heart beat quick,
As at a voice of victory ; but to-day
The spirit of the song is changed, and seems
All mournful. Oh ! that ere my early grave
Shuts out the sunbeam, I might hear one peal
Of the Castilian trumpet, ringing forth
Beneath my father's banner !—In that sound
Were life to you, sweet brothers !—But for me—

Come on—our tasks await us. They who know
Their hours are number'd out, have little time
To give the vague and slumberous languor way,
Which doth steal o'er them in the breath of flowers,
And whisper of soft winds.

ELMINA enters hurriedly.

ELMINA.

This air will calm my spirit, ere yet I meet
His eye, which must be met.—Thou here, Ximena !

[She starts back on seeing XIMENA.]

XIMENA.

Alas ! my mother ! In that hurrying step
And troubled glance I read—

ELMINA (*wildly*).

Thou read'st it not !

Why, who would live, if unto mortal eye
The things lay glaring, which within our hearts
We treasure up for God's ?—Thou read'st it not !
I say, thou canst not !—There 's not one on earth
Shall know the thoughts, which for themselves have made
And kept dark places in the very breast
Whereon he hath laid his slumber, till the hour
When the graves open !

XIMENA.

Mother ! what is this ?

Alas ! your eye is wandering, and your cheek
Flush'd, as with fever ! To your woes the night
Hath brought no rest.

ELMINA.

Rest !—who should rest ?—not he
That holds one earthly blessing to his heart
Nearer than life !—No ! if this world have aught
Of bright or precious, let not him who calls
Such things his own, take rest !—Dark spirits keep watch,
And they to whom fair honour, chivalrous fame,
Were as heaven's air, the vital element
Wherein they breathed, may wake, and find their souls
Made marks for human scorn !—Will they bear on
With life struck down, and thus disrobed of all
Its glorious drapery ?—Who shall tell us this ?
—Will *he* so bear it ?

XIMENA.

Mother ! let us kneel,
And blend our hearts in prayer !—What else is left
To mortals when the dark hour's night is on them ?
—Leave us, Theresa.—Grief like this doth find
Its balm in solitude.

[*Exit* THERESA.]

My mother ! peace
Is Heaven's benignant answer to the cry
Of wounded spirits. Wilt thou kneel with me ?

ELMINA.

Away ! 'tis but for souls unstain'd to wear
Heaven's tranquil image on their depths.—The stream
Of my dark thoughts, all broken by the storm,
Reflects but clouds and lightnings !—Didst thou speak
Of peace ?—'tis fled from earth !—but there is joy !
Wild, troubled joy !—And who shall know, my child !
It is not happiness ?—Why, our own hearts
Will keep the secret close !—Joy, joy ! if but
To leave this desolate city, with its dull
Slow knells and dirges, and to breathe again
Th' untainted mountain-air !—But hush ! the trees,
The flowers, the waters, must hear nought of this !
They are full of voices, and will whisper things—
—We 'll speak of it no more.

XIMENA.

Oh ! pitying Heaven !
This grief doth shake her reason !

ELMINA (*starting*).

Hark ! a step !
'Tis—'tis thy father's !—come away—not now—
He must not see us now !

XIMENA.

Why should this be?

GONZALEZ *enters, and detains* ELMINA.

GONZALEZ.

Elmina, dost thou shun me?—Have we not,
E'en from the hopeful and the sunny time
When youth was as a glory round our brows,
Held on through life together?—And is this,
When eve is gathering round us, with the gloom
Of stormy clouds, a time to part our steps
Upon the darkening wild?

ELMINA (*coldly*).

There needs not *this*.

Why shouldst thou think I shunn'd thee?

GONZALEZ.

Should the love
That shone o'er many years, th' unfading love,
Whose only change hath been from gladdening smiles
To mingling sorrows and sustaining strength,
Thus lightly be forgotten?

ELMINA.

Speak'st *thou* thus?

—I have knelt before thee with that very plea,
When it avail'd me not!—But there are things

Whose very breathings on the soul erase
All record of past love, save the chill sense
Th' unquiet memory of its wasted faith,
And vain devotedness !—Aye ! they that fix
Affection's perfect trust on aught of earth,
Have many a dream to start from !

GONZALEZ.

This is but

The wildness and the bitterness of grief,
Ere yet the unsettled heart hath closed its long
Impatient conflicts with a mightier power,
Which makes all conflict vain.

——Hark ! was there not

A sound of distant trumpets, far beyond
The Moorish tents, and of another tone
Than th' Afric horn, Ximena ?

XIMENA.

Oh, my father !

I know that horn too well.—'Tis but the wind,
Which, with a sudden rising, bears its deep
And savage war-note from us, wafting it
O'er the far hills.

GONZALEZ.

Alas ! this woe must be ! .

I do but shake my spirit from its height
So startling it with hope !—But the dread hour
Shall be met bravely still. I can keep down
Yet for a little while—and Heaven will ask
No more—the passionate workings of my heart ;
—And thine—Elmina ?

ELMINA.

'Tis—I am prepared.

I *have* prepared for all.

GONZALEZ.

Oh, well I knew
Thou wouldst not fail me !—Not in vain my soul,
Upon thy faith and courage, hath built up
Unshaken trust.

ELMINA (*wildly*).

Away !—thou know'st me not !

Man dares too far, his rashness would invest
This our mortality with an attribute
Too high and awful, boasting that he knows
One human heart !

GONZALEZ.

These are wild words, but yet
I will not doubt thee !—Hast thou not been found
Noble in all things, pouring thy soul's light

Undimm'd o'er every trial?—And, as our fates,
So must our names be, undivided!—Thine,
I' th' record of a warrior's life, shall find
Its place of stainless honour.—By his side——

ELMINA.

May this be borne?—How much of agony
Hath the heart room for?—Speak to me in wrath—
I can endure it!—But no gentle words!
No words of love! no praise!—Thy sword might slay,
And be more merciful!

GONZALEZ.

Wherefore art thou thus?

Elmina, my beloved!

ELMINA.

No more of love!

—Have I not said there's that within my heart,
Whereon it falls as living fire would fall
Upon an unclosed wound?

GONZALEZ.

Nay, lift thine eyes

That I may read *their* meaning!

ELMINA.

Never more

With a free soul—What have I said?—'twas nought!

Take thou no heed ! The words of wretchedness
Admit not scrutiny. Wouldst thou mark the speech
Of troubled dreams ?

GONZALEZ.

I have seen thee in the hour
Of thy deep spirit's joy, and when the breath
Of grief hung chilling round thee ; in all change,
Bright health and drooping sickness ; hope and fear ;
Youth and decline ; but never yet, Elmina,
Ne'er hath thine eye till now shrunk back perturb'd
With shame or dread, from mine !

ELMINA.

Thy glance doth search
A wounded heart too deeply.

GONZALEZ.

Hast thou there
Aught to conceal ?

ELMINA.

Who hath not ?

GONZALEZ.

Till this hour
Thou never hadst !—Yet hear me !—by the free
And unattainted fame which wraps the dust
Of thine heroic fathers——

ELMINA.

This to me !

—Bring your inspiring war-notes, and your sounds
Of festal music round a dying man !
Will his heart echo them ?—But if thy words
Were spells, to call up, with each lofty tone,
The grave's most awful spirits, they would stand
Powerless before my anguish !

GONZALEZ.

Then, by her,

Who there looks on thee in the purity
Of her devoted youth, and o'er whose name
No blight must fall, and whose pale cheek must ne'er
Burn with that deeper tinge, caught painfully
From the quick feeling of dishonour.—Speak !
Unfold this mystery !—By thy sons——

ELMINA.

My sons !

And canst *thou* name them ?

GONZALEZ.

Proudly !—Better far

They died with all the promise of their youth,
And the fair honour of their house upon them,
Than that with manhood's high and passionate soul

To fearful strength unfolded, they should live,
Barr'd from the lists of crested chivalry,
And pining, in the silence of a woe,
Which from the heart shuts daylight ;—o'er the shame
Of those who gave them birth !—But *thou* couldst ne'er
Forget their lofty claims !

ELMINA (*wildly*).

'Twas but for them !

'Twas for them only !—Who shall dare arraign
Madness of crime ?—And he who made us, knows
There are dark moments of all hearts and lives,
Which bear down reason !

GONZALEZ.

Thou, whom I have loved
With such high trust, as o'er our nature threw
A glory, scarce allow'd ;—what hast thou done ?
——Ximena, go thou hence !

ELMINA.

No, no ! my child !

There 's pity in thy look !—All other eyes
Are full of wrath and scorn !—Oh ! leave me not !

GONZALEZ.

That I should live to see thee thus abased !
—Yet speak ?—What hast thou done ?

ELMINA.

Look to the gate !

Thou 'rt worn with toil—but take no rest to-night !
The western gate !—Its watchers have been won—
The Christian city hath been bought and sold !
They will admit the Moor !

GONZALEZ.

They have been won !

Brave men and tried so long !—Whose work was this ?

ELMINA.

Think'st thou all hearts like thine ?—Can mothers stand
To see their children perish ?

GONZALEZ.

Then the guilt

Was thine ?

ELMINA.

—Shall mortal dare to call it guilt ?

I tell thee, Heaven, which made all holy things,
Made nought more holy than the boundless love
Which fills a mother's heart !—I say, 'tis woe
Enough, with such an aching tenderness,
To love aught earthly !—and in vain ! in vain !
—We are press'd down too sorely !

GONZALEZ (*in a low desponding voice*).

Now my life

Is struck to worthless ashes!—In my soul
Suspicion hath ta'en root. The nobleness
Henceforth is blotted from all human brows,
And fearful power, a dark and troublous gift,
Almost like prophecy, is pour'd upon me,
To read the guilty secrets in each eye
That once look'd bright with truth!

—Why then I have gain'd

What men call wisdom!—A new sense, to which
All tales that speak of high fidelity,
And holy courage, and proud honour, tried,
Search'd, and found stedfast, even to martyrdom,
Are food for mockery!—Why should I not cast
From my thinn'd locks the wearing helm at once,
And in the heavy sickness of my soul
Throw the sword down for ever?—Is there aught
In all this world of gilded hollowness,
Now the bright hues drop off its loveliest things,
Worth striving for again?

XIMENA.

Father! look up!

Turn unto me, thy child!

GONZALEZ.

Thy face is fair ;
And hath been unto me, in other days,
As morning to the journeyer of the deep ;
But now—'tis too like hers !

ELMINA (*falling at his feet*).

Woe, shame and woe,
Are on me in their might !—forgive, forgive !

GONZALEZ (*starting up*).

Doth the Moor deem that *I* have part or share,
Or counsel in this vileness ?—Stay me not !
Let go thy hold—'tis powerless on me now—
I linger here, while treason is at work !

[*Exit* GONZALEZ.]

ELMINA.

Ximena, dost *thou* scorn me ?

XIMENA.

I have found
In mine own heart too much of feebleness,
Hid, beneath many foldings, from all eyes
But *His* whom nought can blind ;—to dare do aught
But pity thee, dear mother !

ELMINA.

Blessings light
On thy fair head, my gentle child, for this !

Thou kind and merciful !—My soul is faint—
 Worn with long strife !—Is there aught else to do,
 Or suffer, ere we die !—Oh God ! my sons !
 —I have betray'd them !—All their innocent blood
 Is on my soul !

XIMENA.

How shall I comfort thee ?
 —Oh ! hark ! what sounds come deepening on the wind,
 So full of solemn hope !

*(A procession of Nuns passes across the Scene, bearing
 relics, and chanting.)*

CHANT.

A sword is on the land !
 He that bears down young tree and glorious flower,
 Death is gone forth, he walks the wind in power !
 —Where is the warrior's hand ?
 Our steps are in the shadows of the grave,
 Hear us, we perish ! Father, hear, and save !

If, in the days of song,
 The days of gladness, we have call'd on thee,
 When mirthful voices rang from sea to sea,
 And joyous hearts were strong ;

Now, that alike the feeble and the brave
Must cry, "We perish!"—Father! hear, and save!

The days of song are fled!
The winds come loaded, wafting dirge-notes by,
But they that linger soon unmourn'd must die;
—The dead weep not the dead!
—Wilt thou forsake us 'midst the stormy wave?
We sink, we perish!—Father, hear, and save!

Helmet and lance are dust!
Is not the strong man wither'd from our eye?
The arm struck down that held our banners high?
—Thine is our spirit's trust!
Look through the gathering shadows of the grave!
Do we not perish?—Father, hear, and save!

HERNANDEZ enters.

ELMINA.

Why comest thou, man of vengeance?—What have I
To do with thee?—Am I not bow'd enough?
Thou art no mourner's comforter!

HERNANDEZ.

Thy lord

Hath sent me unto thee. Till this day's task
Be closed, thou daughter of the feeble heart!
He bids thee seek him not, but lay thy woes
Before Heaven's altar, and in penitence
Make thy soul's peace with God.

ELMINA.

Till this day's task
Be closed!—there is strange triumph in thine eyes—
Is it that I have fallen from that high place
Whereon I stood in fame?—But I can feel
A wild and bitter pride in thus being past
The power of thy dark glance!—My spirit now
Is wound about by one sole mighty grief;
Thy scorn hath lost its sting.—Thou mayst reproach—

HERNANDEZ.

I come not to reproach thee. Heaven doth work
By many agencies; and in its hour
There is no insect which the summer breeze
From the green leaf shakes trembling, but may serve
Its deep unsearchable purposes, as well
As the great ocean, or th' eternal fires,
Pent in earth's caves!—Thou hast but speeded that,
Which, in th' infatuate blindness of thy heart,
Thou wouldst have trampled o'er all holy ties,
But to avert one day!

ELMINA.

My senses fail—

Thou saidst—speak yet again !—I could not catch
The meaning of thy words.

HERNANDEZ.

E'en now thy lord

Hath sent our foes defiance. On the walls
He stands in conference with the boastful Moor,
And awful strength is with him. Through the blood
Which this day must be pour'd in sacrifice
Shall Spain be free. On all her olive-hills
Shall men set up the battle-sign of fire,
And round its blaze, at midnight, keep the sense
Of vengeance wakeful in each other's hearts
E'en with thy children's tale !

XIMENA.

Peace, father ! peace !

Behold she sinks !—the storm hath done its work
Upon the broken reed. Oh ! lend thine aid
To bear her hence.

[They lead her away.

Scene—A street in Valencia. Several Groups of Citizens and Soldiers, many of them lying on the Steps of a Church. Arms scattered on the Ground around them.

AN OLD CITIZEN.

The air is sultry, as with thunder-clouds.
I left my desolate home, that I might breathe
More freely in heaven's face, but my heart feels
With this hot gloom o'erburthen'd. I have now
No sons to tend me. Which of you, kind friends,
Will bring the old man water from the fount,
To moisten his parch'd lip? *[A citizen goes out.]*

SECOND CITIZEN.

This wasting siege,
Good Father Lopez, hath gone hard with you !
'Tis sad to hear no voices through the house,
Once peopled with fair sons !

THIRD CITIZEN.

Why, better thus,
Than to be haunted with their famish'd cries,
E'en in your very dreams !

OLD CITIZEN.

Heaven's will be done !

These are dark times ! I have not been alone
In my affliction.

THIRD CITIZEN (*with bitterness*).

Why, we have but this thought
Left for our gloomy comfort !—And 'tis well !
Aye, let the balance be awhile struck even
Between the noble's palace and the hut,
Where the worn peasant sickens !—They that bear
The humble dead unhonour'd to their homes,
Pass now i' th' streets no lordly bridal train,
With its exulting music ; and the wretch
Who on the marble steps of some proud hall
Flings himself down to die, in his last need
And agony of famine, doth behold
No scornful guests, with their long purple robes,
To the banquet sweeping by. Why, this is just !
These are the days when pomp is made to feel
Its human mould !

FOURTH CITIZEN.

Heard you last night the sound
Of Saint Jago's bell ?—How sullenly
From the great tower it peal'd !

FIFTH CITIZEN.

Aye, and 'tis said

No mortal hand was near when so it seem'd
To shake the midnight streets.

OLD CITIZEN.

Too well I know
The sound of coming fate !—'Tis ever thus
When Death is on his way to make it night
In the Cid's ancient house. '—Oh ! there are things
In this strange world of which we have all to learn
When its dark bounds are pass'd.—Yon bell, untouch'd,
(Save by the hands we see not) still doth speak—
—When of that line some stately head is mark'd,—
With a wild hollow peal, at dead of night,
Rocking Valencia's towers. I have heard it oft,
Nor known its warning false.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

And will our chief
Buy with the price of his fair children's blood
A few more days of pining wretchedness
For this forsaken city ?

OLD CITIZEN.

Doubt it not !
—But with that ransom he may purchase still
Deliverance for the land !—And yet 'tis sad
To think that such a race, with all its fame,

Should pass away !—For she, his daughter too,
Moves upon earth as some bright thing whose time
To sojourn there is short.

FIFTH CITIZEN.

Then woe for us
When she is gone !—Her voice—the very sound
Of her soft step was comfort, as she moved
Through the still house of mourning !—Who like her
Shall give us hope again ?

OLD CITIZEN.

Be still !—she comes,
And with a mien how changed !—A hurrying step,
And a flush'd cheek !—What may this bode ?—Be still !

XIMENA enters, with Attendants carrying a Banner.

XIMENA.

Men of Valencia ! in an hour like this,
What do ye here ?

A CITIZEN.

We die !

XIMENA.

Brave men die *now*
Girt for the toil, as travellers suddenly

By the dark night o'ertaken on their way !
These days require such death !—It is too much
Of luxury for our wild and angry times,
To fold the mantle round us, and to sink
From life, as flowers that shut up silently,
When the sun's heat doth scorch them !—Hear ye not ?

A CITIZEN.

Lady ! what wouldst thou with us ?

XIMENA.

Rise and arm !

E'en now the children of your chief are led
Forth by the Moor to perish !—Shall this be,
Shall the high sound of such a name be hush'd,
I' th' land to which for ages it hath been
A battle word, as 'twere some passing note
Of shepherd-music ?—Must this work be done,
And ye lie pining here, as men in whom
The pulse which God hath made for noble thought
Can so be thrill'd no longer ?

CITIZEN.

'Tis even so !

Sickness, and toil, and grief, have breath'd upon us,
Our hearts beat faint and low.

XIMENA.

Are ye so poor

Of soul, my countrymen ! that ye can draw
Strength from no deeper source than that which sends
The red blood mantling through the joyous veins,
And gives the fleet step wings ?—Why, how have age
And sensitive womanhood ere now endured,
Through pangs of searching fire, in some proud cause,
Blessing that agony ?—Think ye the Power
Which bore them nobly up, as if to teach
The torturer where eternal Heaven had set
Bounds to his sway, was earthy, of this earth,
This dull mortality ?—Nay, then look on me !
Death's touch hath mark'd me, and I stand amongst you
As one whose place, i' th' sunshine of your world,
Shall soon be left to fill !—I say, the breath
Of th' incense, floating through yon fane, shall scarce
Pass from your path before me ! But even now,
I have that within me, kindling through the dust,
Which from all time hath made high deeds its voice
And token to the nations !—Look on me !
Why hath Heaven pour'd forth courage, as a flame
Wasting the womanish heart, which must be still'd
Yet sooner for its swift consuming brightness,

If not to shame your doubt, and your despair,
And your soul's torpor ?—Yet, arise and arm !
It may not be too late.

A CITIZEN.

Why, what are we,
To cope with hosts ?—Thus faint, and worn, and few,
O'ernumber'd and forsaken, is 't for us
To stand against the mighty ?

XIMENA.

And for whom
Hath He, who shakes the mighty with a breath
From their high places, made the fearfulness,
And ever-wakeful presence of his power,
To the pale startled earth most manifest,
But for the weak ?—Was 't for the helm'd and crown'd
That suns were stay'd at noonday ?—Stormy seas
As a rill parted ?—Mail'd archangels sent
To wither up the strength of kings with death ?
—I tell you, if these marvels have been done,
'Twas for the wearied and th' oppress'd of men,
They needed such !—And generous faith hath power
By her prevailing spirit, e'en yet to work
Deliverances, whose tale shall live with those
Of the great elder time !—Be of good heart !

Who is forsaken?—He that gives the thought
 A place within his breast!—’Tis not for you.
 —Know ye this banner?

CITIZENS (*murmuring to each other*).

Is she not inspired?
 Doth not Heaven call us by her fervent voice?

XIMENA.

Know ye this banner?

CITIZENS.

’Tis the Cid’s.

XIMENA.

The Cid’s!

Who breathes that name but in th’ exulting tone
 Which the heart rings to?—Why, the very wind
 As it swells out the noble standard’s fold
 Hath a triumphant sound!—The Cid’s!—it moved
 Even as a sign of victory through the land,
 From the free skies ne’er stooping to a foe!

OLD CITIZEN.

Can ye still pause, my brethren?—Oh! that youth
 Through this worn frame were kindling once again!

XIMENA.

Ye linger still?—Upon this very air,
 He that was born in happy hour for Spain,

Pour'd forth his conquering spirit !—'Twas the breeze
From your own mountains which came down to wave
This banner of his battles, as it droop'd
Above the champion's death-bed. Nor even then
Its tale of glory closed.—They made no moan
O'er the dead hero, and no dirge was sung,⁷
But the deep tambour and shrill horn of war
Told when the mighty pass'd !—They wrapt him not
With the pale shroud, but braced the warrior's form
In war-array, and on his barbed steed,
As for a triumph, rear'd him ; marching forth
In the hush'd midnight from Valencia's walls,
Beleaguer'd then, as now. All silently
The stately funeral moved :—but who was he
That follow'd, charging on the tall white horse,
And with the solemn standard, broad and pale,
Waving in sheets of snow-light ?—And the cross,
The bloody cross, far-blazing from his shield,
And the fierce meteor-sword ?—They fled, they fled !
The kings of Afric with their countless hosts,
Were dust in his red path !—The scimeter
Was shiver'd as a reed !—for in that hour
The warrior-saint that keeps the watch for Spain,
Was arm'd betimes !—And o'er that fiery field

The Cid's high banner stream'd all joyously,
For still its lord was there !

CITIZENS (*rising tumultuously*).

Even unto death

Again it shall be follow'd !

XIMENA.

Will he see

The noble stem hewn down, the beacon-light
Which his house for ages o'er the land
Hath shone through cloud and storm, thus quench'd at
once ?

Will he not aid his children in the hour
Of this their uttermost peril ?—Awful power
Is with the holy dead, and there are times
When the tomb hath no chain they cannot burst !
—Is it a thing forgotten, how he woke
From its deep rest of old, remembering Spain
In her great danger ?—At the night's mid-watch
How Leon started, when the sound was heard
That shook her dark and hollow-echoing streets,
As with the heavy tramp of steel-clad men,
By thousands marching through !—For he had risen !
The Campeador was on his march again,

And in his arms, and follow'd by his hosts
Of shadowy spearmen !—He had left the world
From which we are dimly parted, and gone forth,
And call'd his buried warriors from their sleep,
Gathering them round him to deliver Spain ;
For Afric was upon her !—Morning broke—
Day rush'd through the cloud of battle ;—but at eve
Our God had triumph'd, and the rescued land
Sent up a shout of victory from the field,
That rock'd her ancient mountains.

THE CITIZENS.

Arm ! to arms !

On to our chief !—We have strength within us yet
To die with our blood roused !—Now, be the word,
For the Cid's house !

[They begin to arm themselves.]

XIMENA.

Ye know his battle-song ?
The old rude strain wherewith his bands went forth
To strike down Paynim swords !

(She sings.)

THE CID'S BATTLE SONG.

The Moor is on his way !
With the tambour-peal and the tecbir-shout,
And the horn o'er the blue seas ringing out,
He hath marshall'd his dark array !

Shout through the vine-clad land !
That her sons on all their hills may hear,
And sharpen the point of the red wolf-spear,
And the sword for the brave man's hand !

*(The CITIZENS join in the song, while they continue
arming themselves.)*

Banners are in the field !
The chief must rise from his joyous board,
And turn from the feast ere the wine be pour'd,
And take up his father's shield !

The Moor is on his way !
Let the peasant leave his olive-ground,
And the goats roam wild through the pine-woods round !
—There is nobler work to-day !

Send forth the trumpet's call !
Till the bridegroom cast the goblet down,
And the marriage-robe and the flowery crown,
And arm in the banquet hall !

And stay the funeral-train !
Bid the chanted mass be hush'd awhile,
And the bier laid down in the holy aisle,
And the mourners girt for Spain !

*(They take up the banner, and follow XIMENA out.
Their voices are heard gradually dying away
at a distance.)*

Ere night, must swords be red !
It is not an hour for knells and tears,
But for helmets braced, and serried spears !
To-morrow for the dead !

The Cid is in array !
His steed is barbed, his plume waves high,
His banner is up in the sunny sky,
Now, joy for the Cross to-day !

*Scene—The Walls of the City. The Plain beneath, with
the Moorish Camp and Army.*

GONZALEZ, GARCIAS, HERNANDEZ.

(A wild Sound of Moorish Music heard from below.)

HERNANDEZ.

What notes are these in their deep mournfulness
So strangely wild ?

GARCIAS.

'Tis the shrill melody
Of the Moor's ancient death-song. Well I know
The rude barbaric sound ; but, till this hour,
It seem'd not fearful.—Now, a shuddering chill
Comes o'er me with its tones.—Lo ! from yon tent
They lead the noble boys !

HERNANDEZ.

The young, and pure,
And beautiful victims !—'Tis on things like these
We cast our hearts in wild idolatry,
Sowing the winds with hope !—Yet this is well.
Thus brightly crown'd with life's most gorgeous flowers,

And all unblemish'd, earth should offer up
Her treasures unto Heaven !

GARCIAS (*to GONZALEZ*).

My chief, the Moor
Hath led your children forth.

GONZALEZ (*starting*).

Are my sons there?

I knew they could not perish ; for yon Heaven
Would ne'er behold it !—Where is he that said
I was no more a father ?—They look changed—
Pallid and worn, as from a prison-house !
Or is 't mine eye sees dimly ?—But their steps
Seem heavy, as with pain.—I hear the clank—
Oh God ! their limbs are fetter'd !

ABDULLAH (*coming forward beneath the walls*).

Christian ! look

Once more upon thy children. There is yet
One moment for the trembling of the sword ;
Their doom is still with thee.

GONZALEZ.

Why should this man
So mock us with the semblance of our kind ?
—Moor ! Moor ! thou dost too daringly provoke,
In thy bold cruelty, th' all-judging One.

Who visits for such things !—Hast thou no sense
Of thy frail nature ?—’Twill be taught thee yet,
And darkly shall the anguish of my soul,
Darkly and heavily, pour itself on thine,
When thou shalt cry for mercy from the dust,
And be denied !

ABDULLAH.

Nay, is it not thyself,
That hast no mercy and no love within thee ?
These are thy sons, the nurslings of thy house ;
Speak ! must they live or die ?

GONZALEZ (*in violent emotion*).

Is it Heaven’s will
To try the dust it kindles for a day,
With infinite agony !—How have I drawn
This chastening on my head !—They bloom’d around me,
And my heart grew too fearless in its joy,
Glorying in their bright promise !—If we fall,
Is there no pardon for our feebleness ?

(HERNANDEZ, *without speaking, holds up a Cross
before him.*)

ABDULLAH.

Speak !

GONZALEZ (*snatching the Cross, and lifting it up*).

Let the earth be shaken through its depths,
But *this* must triumph !

ABDULLAH (*coldly*).

Be it as thou wilt.

—Unsheathe the scimeter ! [*To his Guards.*

GARCIAS (*to GONZALEZ*).

Away, my chief !

This is your place no longer. There are things
No human heart, though battle-proof as yours,
Unnadden'd may sustain.

GONZALEZ.

Be still ! I have now
No place on earth but this !

ALPHONSO (*from beneath*).

Men ! give me way,
That I may speak forth once before I die !

GARCIAS.

The princely boy !—how gallantly his brow
Wears its high nature in the face of death !

ALPHONSO.

Father !

GONZALEZ.

My son ! my son !—Mine eldest-born !

ALPHONSO.

Stay but upon the ramparts !—Fear thou not—
 There is good courage in me : oh ! my father !
 I will not shame thee !—only let me fall
 Knowing thine eye looks proudly on thy child,
 So shall my heart have strength.

GONZALEZ.

Would, would to God,
 That I might die for thee, my noble boy !
 Alphonso, my fair son !

ALPHONSO.

Could I have lived,
 I might have been a warrior !—Now, farewell !
 But look upon me still !—I will not blench
 When the keen sabre flashes—Mark me well !
 Mine eyelids shall not quiver as it falls,
 So thou wilt look upon me !

GARCIA (to GONZALEZ).

Nay, my lord !
 We must begone !—Thou *canst* not bear it !

GONZALEZ.

Peace !
 —Who hath told *thee* how much man's heart can bear ?
 —Lend me thine arm—my brain whirls fearfully—

How thick the shades close round !—my boy ! my boy !
Where art thou in this gloom ?

GARCIAS.

Let us go hence !

This is a dreadful moment !

GONZALEZ.

Hush ! what saidst thou ?

Now let me look on him !—Dost *thou* see aught
Through the dull mist which wraps us ?

GARCIAS.

I behold—

Oh ! for a thousand Spaniards to rush down—

GONZALEZ.

Thou seest—My heart stands still to hear thee speak !
—There seems a fearful hush upon the air,
As 't were the dead of night !

GARCIAS.

The hosts have closed
Around the spot in stillness. Through the spears,
Ranged thick and motionless, I see him not ;
—But now—

GONZALEZ.

He bade me keep mine eye upon him,
And all is darkness round me !—Now ?

GARCIA.

A sword,

A sword, springs upward, like a lightning burst,
Through the dark serried mass !—Its cold blue glare
Is wavering to and fro—'tis vanish'd—hark !

GONZALEZ.

I heard it, yes !—I heard the dull dead sound
That heavily broke the silence !—Didst thou speak ?
—I lost thy words—come nearer !

GARCIA.

'Twas—'tis past !—

The sword fell *then* !HERNANDEZ (*with exultation*).

Flow forth thou noble blood !

Fount of Spain's ransom and deliverance, flow
Uncheck'd and brightly forth !—Thou kingly stream !
Blood of our heroes ! blood of martyrdom !
Which through so many warrior-hearts hast pour'd
Thy fiery currents, and hast made our hills
Free, by thine own free offering !—Bathe the land,
But there thou shalt not sink !—Our very air
Shall take thy colouring, and our loaded skies
O'er th' infidel hang dark and ominous,
With battle-hues of thee !—And thy deep voice

Rising above them to the judgment-seat
Shall call a burst of gather'd vengeance down,
To sweep th' oppressor from us!—For thy wave
Hath made his guilt run o'er!

GONZALEZ (*endeavouring to rouse himself*).

'Tis all a dream!

There is not one—no hand on earth could harm
That fair boy's graceful head!—Why look you thus?

ABDULLAH (*pointing to CARLOS*).

Christian e'en yet thou hast a son!

GONZALEZ.

E'en yet!

CARLOS.

My father! take me from these fearful men!
Wilt thou not save me, father?

GONZALEZ (*attempting to unsheath his sword*).

Is the strength
From mine arm shiver'd?—Garcias follow me!

GARCIAS.

Whither, my chief?

GONZALEZ.

Why, we can die as well
On yonder plain,—aye, a spear's thrust will do
The little that our misery doth require,

Sooner than e'en this anguish ! Life is best
Thrown from us in such moments.

[Voices heard at a distance.

HERNANDEZ.

Hush ! what strain
Floats on the wind ?

GARCIAS.

'Tis the Cid's battle song !
What marvel hath been wrought ?

[Voices approaching heard in chorus.

The Moor is on his way !
With the tambour peal and the tecbir shout,
And the horn o'er the blue seas ringing out,
He hath marshall'd his dark array !

*XIMENA enters, followed by the CITIZENS, with the
Banner.*

XIMENA.

Is it too late ?—My father, these are men
Through life and death prepared to follow thee
Beneath this banner !—Is their zeal too late ?
—Oh ! there's a fearful history on thy brow !
What hast thou seen ?

GARCIAS.

It is not *all* too late.

XIMENA.

My brothers !

HERNANDEZ.

All is well.

(*To GARCIAS.*) Hush ! wouldst thou chill
That which hath sprung within them, as a flame
From th' altar-embers mounts in sudden brightness ?
I say, 'tis not too late, ye men of Spain !
On to the rescue !

XIMENA.

Bless me, oh my father !
And I will hence, to aid thee with my prayers,
Sending my spirit with thee through the storm,
Lit up by flashing swords !

GONZALEZ (*falling upon her neck*).

Hath aught been spared ?
Am I not all bereft ?—Thou 'rt left me still !
Mine own, my loveliest one, thou 'rt left me still !
Farewell !—thy father's blessing, and thy God's,
Be with thee, my Ximena !

XIMENA.

Fare thee well !

If, ere thy steps turn homeward from the field,
The voice is hush'd that still hath welcomed thee,
Think of me in thy victory !

HERNANDEZ.

Peace ! no more !

This is no time to melt our nature down
To a soft stream of tears !—Be of strong heart !
Give me the banner ! Swell the song again !

THE CITIZENS.

Ere night, must swords be red !
It is not an hour for knells and tears,
But for helmets braced and serried spears !
—To-morrow for the dead !

[Exeunt omnes.]

Scene—Before the Altar of a Church.

ELMINA rises from the steps of the Altar.

ELMINA.

The clouds are fearful that o'erhang thy ways,
Oh, thou mysterious Heaven !—It cannot be
That I have drawn the vials of thy wrath,
To burst upon me through the lifting up
Of a proud heart, elate in happiness !
No ! in my day's full noon, for me life's flowers
But wreath'd a cup of trembling ; and the love,
The boundless love, my spirit was form'd to bear,
Hath ever, in its place of silence, been
A trouble and a shadow, tinging thought
With hues too deep for joy !—I never look'd
On my fair children, in their buoyant mirth,
Or sunny sleep, when all the gentle air
Seem'd glowing with their quiet blessedness,
But o'er my soul there came a shuddering sense
Of earth, and its pale changes ; even like that
Which vaguely mingles with our glorious dreams,

A restless and disturbing consciousness
That the bright things must fade !—How have I shrunk
From the dull murmur of th' unquiet voice,
With its low tokens of mortality,
Till my heart fainted 'midst their smiles !—their smiles !
—Where are those glad looks now ?—Could they go down,
With all their joyous light, that seem'd not earth's,
To the cold grave ?—My children !—Righteous Heaven !
There floats a dark remembrance o'er my brain
Of one who told me, with relentless eye,
That *this* should be the hour !

XIMENA *enters*.

XIMENA.

They are gone forth
Unto the rescue !—strong in heart and hope,
Faithful, though few !—My mother, let thy prayers
Call on the land's good saints to lift once more
The sword and cross that sweep the field for Spain,
As in old battle ; so thine arms e'en yet
May clasp thy sons !—For me, my part is done !
The flame, which dimly might have linger'd yet
A little while, hath gather'd all its rays
Brightly to sink at once ; and it is well !

The shadows are around me ! to thy heart
Fold me, that I may die.

ELMINA.

My child !—What dream
Is on thy soul ?—Even now thine aspect wears
Life's brightest inspiration !

XIMENA.

Death's !

ELMINA.

Away !

Thine eye hath starry clearness, and thy cheek
Doth glow beneath it with a richer hue
Than tinged its earliest flower !

XIMENA.

It well may be !

There are far deeper and far warmer hues
Than those which draw their colouring from the founts
Of youth, or health, or hope.

ELMINA.

Nay, speak not thus !

There 's that about thee shining which would send
E'en through *my* heart a sunny glow of joy,
Wer't not for these sad words. The dim cold air
And solemn light, which wrap these tombs and shrines

As a pale gleaming shroud, seem kindled up
With a young spirit of ethereal hope
Caught from thy mien !—Oh no ! this is not death !

XIMENA.

Why should not He, whose touch dissolves our chain,
Put on his robes of beauty when he comes
As a deliverer ?—He hath many forms,
They should not all be fearful !—If his call
Be but our gathering to that distant land
For whose sweet waters we have pined with thirst,
Why should not its prophetic sense be borne
Into the heart's deep stillness, with a breath
Of summer-winds, a voice of melody,
Solemn, yet lovely ?—Mother ! I depart !
—Be it thy comfort, in the after-days,
That thou hast seen me thus !

ELMINA.

Distract me not
With such wild fears ! Can I bear on with life
When thou art gone ?—Thy voice, thy step, thy smile,
Pass'd from my path ?—Alas ! even now thine eye
Is changed—thy cheek is fading !

XIMENA.

Aye, the clouds

Of the dim hour are gathering o'er my sight,
And yet I fear not, for the God of Help
Comes in that quiet darkness !—It may soothe
Thy woes, my mother ! if I tell thee now,
With what glad calmness I behold the veil
Falling between me and the world, wherein
My heart so ill hath rested.

ELMINA.

Thine !

XIMENA.

Rejoice

For her, that, when the garland of her life
Was blighted, and the springs of hope were dried,
Received her summons hence ; and had no time,
Bearing the canker at th' impatient heart,
To wither, sorrowing for that gift of Heaven,
Which lent one moment of existence light,
That dimm'd the rest forever !

ELMINA.

How is this ?

My child, what mean'st thou ?

XIMENA.

Mother ! I have loved,
And been beloved !—the sunbeam of an hour,

Which gave life's hidden treasures to mine eye,
 As they lay shining in their secret founts,
 Went out, and left them colourless.—'Tis past—
 And what remains on earth?—the rainbow mist,
 Through which I gazed, hath melted, and my sight
 Is clear'd to look on all things as they are !
 —But this is far too mournful !—Life's dark gift
 Hath fallen too early and too cold upon me !
 —Therefore I would go hence !

ELMINA.

And thou hast loved

Unknown——

XIMENA.

Oh ! pardon, pardon that I veil'd
 My thoughts from thee !—But thou hadst woes enough,
 And mine came o'er me when thy soul had need
 Of more than mortal strength !—For I had scarce
 Given the deep consciousness that I was loved
 A treasure's place within my secret heart,
 When earth's brief joy went from me !

'Twas at morn

I saw the warriors to their field go forth,
 And he—my chosen—was there amongst the rest,
 With his young, glorious brow !—I look'd again—

The strife grew dark beneath me—but his plume
 Waved free above the lances.—Yet again—
 —It had gone down ! and steeds were trampling o'er
 The spot to which mine eyes were riveted,
 Till blinded by th' intenseness of their gaze !
 —And then—at last—I hurried to the gate,
 And met him there !—I met him !—on his shield,
 And with his cloven helm, and shiver'd sword,
 And dark hair steep'd in blood !—They bore him past—
 Mother !—I saw his face !—Oh ! such a death
 Works fearful changes on the fair of earth,
 The pride of woman's eye !

ELMINA.

Sweet daughter, peace !
 Wake not the dark remembrance ; for thy frame——

XIMENA.

—There *will* be peace ere long. I shut my heart,
 Even as a tomb, o'er that lone silent grief,
 That I might spare it thee !—But now the hour
 Is come when that which would have pierced thy soul
 Shall be its healing balm. Oh ! weep thou not,
 Save with a gentle sorrow !

ELMINA.

Must it be ?
 Art thou indeed to leave me ?

XIMENA (*exultingly*).

Be thou glad !

I say, rejoice above thy favour'd child !
Joy, for the soldier when his field is fought,
Joy, for the peasant when his vintage-task
Is closed at eve !—But most of all for her,
Who, when her life had changed its glittering robes
For the dull garb of sorrow, which doth cling
So heavily around the journeyers on,
Cast down its weight—and slept !

ELMINA.

Alas ! thine eye
Is wandering—yet how brightly !—Is this death,
Or some high wondrous vision ?—Speak, my child !
How is it with thee now ?

XIMENA (*wildly*).

I see it still !

'Tis floating, like a glorious cloud on high,
My father's banner !—Hear'st thou not a sound ?
The trumpet of Castile ?—Praise, praise to Heaven !
—Now may the weary rest !—Be still !—Who calls
The night so fearful ?—— [She dies.

ELMINA.

No ! she is not dead !

—Ximena !—speak to me !—Oh ! yet a tone
 From that sweet voice, that I may gather in
 One more remembrance of its lovely sound,
 Ere the deep silence fall !—What ! is all hush'd ?
 —No, no !—it cannot be !—How should we bear
 The dark misgivings of our souls, if Heaven
 Left not such beings with us ?—But is this
 Her wonted look ?—too sad a quiet lies
 On its dim fearful beauty !—Speak, Ximena !
 Speak !—my heart dies within me !—She is gone,
 With all her blessed smiles !—My child ! my child !
 Where art thou ?—Where is that which answer'd me,
 From thy soft-shining eyes ?—Hush ! doth she move ?
 —One light lock seem'd to tremble on her brow,
 As a pulse throb'd beneath ;—'twas but the voice
 Of my despair that stirr'd it !—She is gone !

[*She throws herself on the body.* **GONZALEZ**
enters, alone, and wounded.

ELMINA (*rising as he approaches*).

I must not *now* be scorn'd !—No, not a look,
 A whisper of reproach !—Behold my woe !
 —Thou canst not scorn me now !

GONZALEZ.

Hast thou heard *all* ?

ELMINA.

Thy daughter on my bosom laid her head,
And pass'd away to rest. Behold her there,
Even such as death hath made her ! *

GONZALEZ (*bending over XIMENA's body*).

Thou art gone

A little while before me, oh, my child !
Why should the traveller weep to part with those
That scarce an hour will reach their promised land
Ere he too cast his pilgrim staff away,
And spread his couch beside them ?

ELMINA.

Must it be

Henceforth enough that *once* a thing so fair
Had its bright place amongst us ?—Is this all,
Left for the years to come ?—We will not stay !
Earth's chain each hour grows weaker.

GONZALEZ (*still gazing upon XIMENA*).

And thou 'rt laid

To slumber in the shadow, blessed child !
Of a yet stainless altar, and beside
A sainted warrior's tomb !—Oh, fitting place
For thee to yield thy pure heroic soul

Back unto him that gave it !—And thy cheek
Yet smiles in its bright paleness !

ELMINA.

Hadst thou seen
The look with which she pass'd !

GONZALEZ (*still bending over her*).

Why, 'tis almost
Like joy to view thy beautiful repose !
The faded image of that perfect calm
Floats, e'en as long-forgotten music, back
Into my weary heart !—No dark wild spot
On *thy* clear brow doth tell of bloody hands
That quench'd young life by violence !—We have seen
Too much of horror, in one crowded hour,
To weep for aught, so gently gather'd hence !
—Oh ! *man* leaves other traces !

ELMINA (*suddenly starting*).

It returns
On my bewilder'd soul !—Went ye not forth
Unto the rescue ?—And thou 'rt here alone !
—Where are my sons ?

GONZALEZ (*solemnly*).

We were too late !

ELMINA.

Too late !

Hast thou nought else to tell me ?

GONZALEZ.

I brought back

From that last field the banner of my sires,
And my own death-wound.

ELMINA.

Thine !

GONZALEZ.

Another hour

Shall hush its throbs forever. I go hence,
And with me——

ELMINA.

No !—Man *could* not lift his hands—
—Where hast thou left thy sons ?

GONZALEZ.

I *have* no sons.

ELMINA.

What hast thou said ?

GONZALEZ.

That now there lives not one
To wear the glory of mine ancient house,
When I am gone to rest.

ELMINA (*throwing herself on the ground, and speaking
in a low hurried voice*).

In one brief hour, all gone !—and *such* a death !
—I see their blood gush forth !—their graceful heads—
—Take the dark vision from me, oh, my God !
And such a death for *them* !—I was not there !
They were but mine in beauty and in joy,
Not in that mortal anguish !—All, all gone !
—Why should I struggle more ?—What *is* this Power,
Against whose might, on all sides pressing us,
We strive with fierce impatience, which but lays
Our own frail spirits prostrate ?

(After a long pause.)

Now I know

Thy hand, my God !—and they are soonest crush'd
That most withstand it !—I resist no more.
(*She rises.*)—A light, a light springs up from grief and
death,
Which with its solemn radiance doth reveal
Why we have been thus tried !

GONZALEZ.

Then I may still

Fix my last look on thee, in holy love,
Parting, but yet with hope !

ELMINA (*falling at his feet*).

Canst thou forgive ?

—Oh, I have driven the arrow to thy heart,
That should have buried it within mine own,
And borne the pang in silence !—I have cast
Thy life's fair honour, in my wild despair,
As an unvalued gem upon the waves,
Whence thou hast snatch'd it back, to bear from earth,
All stainless, on thy breast.—Well hast thou done—
But I—canst thou forgive ?

GONZALEZ.

Within this hour

I have stood upon that verge whence mortals fall,
And learn'd how 'tis with one whose sight grows dim,
And whose foot trembles on the gulf's dark side.
—Death purifies all feeling—We will part
In pity and in love.

ELMINA.

Death !—And thou too

Art on thy way !—Oh, joy for thee, high heart !
Glory and joy for thee !—The day is closed,
And well and nobly hast thou borne thyself
Through its long battle-toils, though many swords
Have enter'd thine own soul !—But on my head

Recoil the fierce invokings of despair,
And I am left far distanced in the race,
The lonely one of earth !—Aye, this is just.
I am not worthy that upon my breast
In this, thine hour of victory, thou shouldst yield
Thy spirit unto God !

GONZALEZ.

Thou art ! thou art !

Oh ! a life's love, a heart's long faithfulness,
Ev'n in the presence of eternal things,
Wearing their chasten'd beauty all undimm'd,
Assert their lofty claims ; and these are not
For one dark hour to cancel !—We are here,
Before that altar which received the vows
Of our unbroken youth, and meet it is
For such a witness, in the sight of Heaven,
And in the face of death, whose shadowy arm
Comes dim between us, to record th' exchange
Of our tried hearts' forgiveness.—Who are they,
That in one path have journey'd, needing not
Forgiveness at its close ?

(A Citizen enters hastily.)

CITIZEN.

The Moors ! the Moors !

GONZALEZ.

How ! is the city storm'd ?
Oh ! righteous Heaven !—for this I look'd not yet !
Hath all been done in vain ?—Why then, 'tis time
For prayer, and then to rest !

CITIZEN.

The sun shall set,
And not a Christian voice be left for prayer,
To-night within Valencia ?—Round our walls
The paynim host is gathering for th' assault,
And we have none to guard them.

GONZALEZ.

Then my place
Is here no longer.—I had hoped to die
Ev'n by the altar and the sepulchre
Of my brave sires—but this was not to be !
Give me my sword again, and lead me hence
Back to the ramparts. I have yet an hour,
And it hath still high duties.—Now, my wife !
Thou mother of my children—of the dead—
Whom I name unto thee in stedfast hope—
Farewell !

ELMINA.

No, *not* farewell !—My soul hath risen

To mate itself with thine ! and by thy side
Amidst the hurtling lances I will stand,
As one on whom a brave man's love hath been
Wasted not utterly.

GONZALEZ.

I thank thee, Heaven !
That I have tasted of the awful joy
Which thou hast given to temper hours like this,
With a deep sense of thee, and of thine ends
In these dread visitings !
(*To ELMINA.*) We will not part,
But with the spirit's parting !

ELMINA.

One farewell
To her, that mantled with sad loveliness,
Doth slumber at our feet !—My blessed child !
Oh ! in thy heart's affliction thou wert strong,
And holy courage did pervade thy woe,
As light the troubled waters !—Be at peace !
Thou whose bright spirit made itself the soul
Of all that were around thee !—And thy life
E'en then was struck, and withering at the core !
—Farewell !—thy parting look hath on me fall'n,
E'en as a gleam of heaven, and I am now

More like what thou hast been !—My soul is hush'd,
For a still sense of purer worlds hath sunk
And settled on its depths with that last smile
Which from thine shone forth.—Thou hast not lived
In vain—my child, farewell !

GONZALEZ.

Surely for thee
Death had no sting, Ximena !—We are blest,
To learn one secret of the shadowy pass,
From such an aspect's calmness. Yet once more
I kiss thy pale young cheek, my broken flower !
In token of th' undying love and hope,
Whose land is far away. [*Exeunt.*

Scene—The Walls of the City.

HERNANDEZ.—*A few Citizens gathered round him.*

HERNANDEZ.

Why, men have cast the treasures, which their lives
Had been worn down in gathering, on the pyre,
Aye, at their household hearths have lit the brand,
Even from that shrine of quiet love to bear
The flame which gave their temples and their homes,
In ashes, to the winds !—They have done this,
Making a blasted void where once the sun
Look'd upon lovely dwellings ; and from earth
Razing all record that on such a spot
Childhood hath sprung, age faded, misery wept,
And frail Humanity knelt before her God ;
—They have done *this*, in their free nobleness,
Rather than see the spoiler's tread pollute
Their holy places !—Praise, high praise be theirs,
Who have left man such lessons !—And these things,
Made your own hills their witnesses !—The sky,
Whose arch bends o'er you, and the seas, wherein

Your rivers pour their gold, rejoicing saw
 The altar, and the birth-place, and the tomb,
 And all memorials of man's heart and faith,
 Thus proudly honour'd !—Be ye not outdone
 By the departed !—Though the godless foe
 Be close upon us, we have power to snatch
 The spoils of victory from him. Be but strong !
 A few bright torches and brief moments yet
 Shall baffle his flush'd hope, and we may die,
 Laughing him unto scorn.—Rise, follow me,
 And thou, Valencia ! triumph in thy fate,
 The ruin, not the yoke, and make thy towers
 A beacon unto Spain !

CITIZEN.

We'll follow thee !

—Alas ! for our fair city, and the homes
 Wherein we rear'd our children !—But away !
 The Moor shall plant no crescent o'er our fanes !

VOICE (*from a Tower on the Walls*).

Succours !—Castile ! Castile !

CITIZENS (*rushing to the spot*).

It is even so !

Now blessing be to Heaven, for we are saved !
 Castile, Castile !

VOICE (*from the Tower*).

Line after line of spears,
Lance after lance, upon the horizon's verge,
Like festal lights from cities bursting up,
Doth skirt the plain !—In faith, a noble host !

ANOTHER VOICE.

The Moor hath turn'd him from our walls, to front
Th' advancing might of Spain !

CITIZENS (*shouting*).

Castile! Castile!

(GONZALEZ enters, supported by ELMINA and a Citizen).

GONZALEZ.

What shouts of joy are these ?

HERNANDEZ.

Hail, chieftain ! hail !

Thus ev'n in death 'tis given thee to receive
The conqueror's crown !—Behold our God hath heard,
And arm'd himself with vengeance !—Lo ! they come !
The lances of Castile !

GONZALEZ.

I knew, I knew
Thou wouldst not utterly, my God, forsake

Thy servant in his need !—My blood and tears
Have not sunk vainly to th' attesting earth !
Praise to thee, thanks and praise, that I have lived
To see this hour !

ELMINA.

And I too bless thy name,
Though thou hast proved me unto agony !
Oh God !—Thou God of chastening !

VOICE (*from the Tower*).

They move on !

I see the royal banner in the air,
With its emblazon'd towers !

GONZALEZ.

Go, bring ye forth
The banner of the Cid, and plant it here,
To stream above me, for an answering sign
That the good cross doth hold its lofty place
Within Valencia still !—What see ye now ?

HERNANDEZ.

I see a kingdom's might upon its path,
Moving, in terrible magnificence,
Unto revenge and victory !—With the flash
Of knightly swords, up-springing from the ranks,
As meteors from a still and gloomy deep,

And with the waving of ten thousand plumes,
Like a land's harvest in the autumn-wind,
And with fierce light, which is not of the sun,
But flung from sheets of steel—it comes, it comes,
The vengeance of our God !

GONZALEZ.

I hear it now,
The heavy tread of mail-clad multitudes,
Like thunder-showers upon the forest-paths.

HERNANDEZ.

Aye, earth knows well the omen of that sound,
And she hath echoes, like a sepulchre's,
Pent in her secret hollows, to respond
Unto the step of death !

GONZALEZ.

Hark ! how the wind
Swells proudly with the battle-march of Spain !
Now the heart feels its power !—A little while
Grant me to live, my God !—What pause is this ?

HERNANDEZ.

A deep and dreadful one !—the serried files
Level their spears for combat ; now the hosts
Look on each other in their brooding wrath,
Silent, and face to face.

VOICES HEARD WITHOUT, CHANTING.

Calm on the bosom of thy God,
Fair spirit ! rest thee now !
E'en while with ours thy footsteps trod,
His seal was on thy brow.

Dust, to its narrow house beneath !
Soul, to its place on high !
They that have seen thy look in death,
No more may fear to die.

ELMINA (*to GONZALEZ*).

It is the death-hymn o'er thy daughter's bier !
—But I am calm, and e'en like gentle winds,
That music, through the stillness of my heart,
Sends mournful peace.

GONZALEZ.

Oh ! well those solemn tones
Accord with such an hour, for all her life
Breath'd of a hero's soul !

[A sound of trumpets and shouting from the plain.]

HERNANDEZ.

Now, now they close !—Hark ! what a dull dead sound

Is in the Moorish war-shout !—I have known
 Such tones prophetic oft.—The shock is given—
 Lo ! they have placed their shields before their hearts,
 And lower'd their lances with the streamers on,
 And on their steeds bent forward !—God for Spain !
 The first bright sparks of battle have been struck
 From spear to spear, across the gleaming field !
 —There is no sight on which the blue sky looks
 To match with this !—'Tis not the gallant crests,
 Nor banners with their glorious blazonry ;
 The very nature and high soul of man
 Doth now reveal itself !

GONZALEZ.

Oh, raise me up,
 That I may look upon the noble scene !
 —It will not be !—That this dull mist would pass
 A moment from my sight !—Whence rose that shout,
 As in fierce triumph ?

HERNANDEZ (*clasping his hands*).

Must I look on this ?

The banner sinks—'tis taken !

GONZALEZ.

Whose ?

HERNANDEZ.

Castile's !

GONZALEZ.

Oh, God of Battles !

ELMINA.

Calm thy noble heart !

Thou wilt not pass away without thy meed.

Nay, rest thee on my bosom.

HERNANDEZ.

Cheer thee yet !

Our knights have spurr'd to rescue.—There is now

A whirl, a mingling of all terrible things,

Yet more appalling than the fierce distinctness

Wherewith they moved before !—I see tall plumes

All wildly tossing o'er the battle's tide,

Sway'd by the wrathful motion, and the press

Of desperate men, as cedar-boughs by storms.

Many a white streamer there is dyed with blood,

Many a false corslet broken, many a shield

Pierced through !—Now, shout for Santiago, shout !

Lo ! javelins with a moment's brightness cleave

The thickening dust, and barbed steeds go down

With their helm'd riders !—Who, but One, can tell

How spirits part amidst that fearful rush

And trampling on of furious multitudes ?

GONZALEZ.

Thou 'rt silent !—Seest thou more ?—My soul grows dark.

HERNANDEZ.

And dark and troubled, as an angry sea,
Dashing some gallant armament in scorn
Against its rocks, is all on which I gaze !
—I can but tell thee how tall spears are cross'd,
And lances seem to shiver, and proud helms
To lighten with the stroke !—But round the spot,
Where, like a storm-fell'd mast, our standard sank,
The heart of battle burns.

GONZALEZ.

Where is that spot ?

HERNANDEZ.

It is beneath the lonely tuft of palms,
That lift their green heads o'er the tumult still,
In calm and stately grace.

GONZALEZ.

There, didst thou say ?

Then God is with us, and we *must* prevail !
For on that spot they died !—My children's blood
Calls on th' avenger thence !

ELMINA.

They perish'd there !

—And the bright locks that waved so joyously
 To the free winds, lay trampled and defiled
 Ev'n on that place of death !—Oh, Merciful !
 Hush the dark thought within me !

HERNANDEZ (*with sudden exultation*).

Who is he,
 On the white steed, and with the castled helm,
 And the gold-broider'd mantle, which doth float
 E'en like a sunny cloud above the fight ;
 And the pale cross, which from his breast-plate gleams
 With star-like radiance ?

GONZALEZ (*eagerly*).

Didst thou say the cross ?

HERNANDEZ.

On his mail'd bosom shines a broad white cross,
 And his long plumage through the darkening air
 Streams like a snow-wreath.

GONZALEZ.

That should be—

HERNANDEZ.

The king !

—Was it not told us how he sent, of late,
 To the Cid's tomb, e'en for the silver cross,
 Which he who slumbers there was wont to bind
 O'er his brave heart in fight. °

GONZALEZ (*springing up joyfully*).

My king ! my king !

Now all good saints for Spain !—My noble king !
And thou art there !—That I might look once more
Upon thy face !—But yet I thank thee, Heaven !
That thou hast sent him, from my dying hands
Thus to receive his city !

[*He sinks back into ELMINA's arms.*]

HERNANDEZ.

He hath clear'd

A pathway 'midst the combat, and the light
Follows his charge through yon close living mass,
E'en as the gleam on some proud vessel's wake
Along the stormy waters !—'Tis redeem'd—
The castled banner !—It is flung once more
In joy and glory, to the sweeping winds !
—There seems a wavering through the paynim hosts—
Castile doth press them sore—Now, now rejoice !

GONZALEZ.

What hast thou seen ?

HERNANDEZ.

Abdullah falls ! He falls !

The man of blood !—the spoiler !—he hath sunk
In our king's path !—Well hath that royal sword

Avenged thy cause, Gonzalez!

They give way,

**The Crescent's van is broken !—On the hills
And the dark pine-woods may the infidel
Call vainly, in his agony of fear,
To cover him from vengeance !—Lo ! they fly !
They of the forest and the wilderness
Are scatter'd, e'en as leaves upon the wind !
Woe to the sons of Afric !—Let the plains,
And the vine-mountains, and Hesperian seas,
Take their dead unto them !—that blood shall wash
Our soil from stains of bondage.**

GONZALEZ (*attempting to raise himself*).

Set me free !

**Come with me forth, for I must greet my king,
After his battle-field !**

HERNANDEZ.

Oh, blest in death !

**Chosen of Heaven, farewell !—Look on the Cross,
And part from earth in peace !**

GONZALEZ.

Now charge once more !

**God is with Spain, and Santiago's sword
Is reddening all the air!—Shout forth 'Castile!'**

The day is ours !—I go ; but fear ye not !
For Afric's lance is broken, and my sons
Have won their first good field ! [*He dies.*

ELMINA.

Look on me yet !

Speak one farewell, my husband !—must thy voice
Enter my soul no more !—Thine eye is fix'd—
Now is my life uprooted,—and 'tis well.

*(A Sound of triumphant Music is heard, and many
Castilian Knights and Soldiers enter.)*

A CITIZEN.

Hush your triumphal sounds, although ye come
E'en as deliverers !—But the noble dead,
And those that mourn them, claim from human hearts
Deep silent reverence.

ELMINA (*rising proudly*).

No, swell forth, Castile !

Thy trumpet-music, till the seas and heavens,
And the deep hills, give every stormy note
Echoes to ring through Spain !—How, know ye not
That all array'd for triumph, crown'd and robed
With the strong spirit which hath saved the land,
Ev'n now a conqueror to his rest is gone ?
—Fear not to break that sleep, but let the wind

Swell on with victory's shout !—*He* will not hear—
Hath earth a sound more sad ?

HERNANDEZ.

Lift ye the dead,
And bear him with the banner of his race
Waving above him proudly, as it waved
O'er the Cid's battles, to the tomb, wherein
His warrior-sires are gather'd. [*They raise the body.*]

ELMINA.

Aye, 'tis thus
Thou shouldst be honour'd !—And I follow thee
With an unfaltering and a lofty step,
To that last home of glory. She that wears
In her deep heart the memory of thy love
Shall thence draw strength for all things, till the God,
Whose hand 'round her hath unpeopled earth,
Looking upon her still and chasten'd soul,
Call it once more to thine !

(*To the Castilians.*)

Awake, I say,
Tambour and trumpet, wake !—And let the land
Through all her mountains hear your funeral peal !
—So should a hero pass to his repose. [*Exeunt omnes.*]

NOTES.

Note 1.

MOUNTAIN Christians, those natives of Spain, who, under their prince, Pelayo, took refuge amongst the mountains of the northern provinces, where they maintained their religion and liberty, whilst the rest of their country was overrun by the Moors.

Note 2.

Oh, free doth sorrow pass, &c.

Frey geht das Unglück durch die ganze Erde.

Schiller's Death of Wallenstein, act iv. sc. 2.

Note 3.

Tizona, the fire-brand. The name of the Cid's favourite sword, taken in battle from the Moorish king Bucar.

Note 4

How he won Valencia from the Moor, &c.

Valencia, which has been repeatedly besieged, and taken by the armies of different nations, remained in the possession of the Moors for an hundred and seventy years after the Cid's death. It was regained from them by King Don Jayme of Aragon, surnamed the Conqueror ; after whose success I have ventured to suppose it governed by a descendant of the Campeador.

Note 5.

It was a Spanish tradition, that the great bell of the cathedral of Saragossa always tolled spontaneously before a king of Spain died.

Note 6.

" El que en buen hora nasco ; " he that was born in happy hour. An appellation given to the Cid in the ancient chronicles.

Note 7.

For this, and the subsequent allusions to Spanish legends, see *The Romances and Chronicle of the Cid*.

Note 8.

" La voilà, telle que la mort nous l'a faite ! "—*Bossuet, Oraisons Funèbres*.

Note 9.

This circumstance is recorded of King Don Alfonso, the last of that name. He sent to the Cid's tomb for the cross which that warrior was accustomed to wear upon his breast when he went to battle, and had it made into one for himself; "because of the faith which he had, that through it he should obtain the victory."—*Southey's Chronicle of the Cid*.



THE VESPERS OF PALERMO.

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT DI PROCIDA.

RAIMOND DI PROCIDA, *his Son.*

ERIBERT, *Viceroy.*

DE COUCI.

MONTALBA.

GUIDO.

ALBERTI.

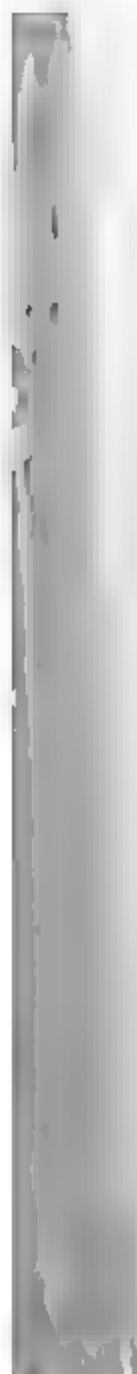
ANSELMO, *a Monk.*

VITTORIA.

CONSTANCE, *Sister to Eribert.*

Nobles, Soldiers, Messengers, Vassals, Peasants, &c. &c.

Scene—Palermo.



THE VESPERS OF PALERMO.

A TRAGEDY.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.—*A Valley, with Vineyards and Cottages.*

Groups of Peasants—PROCIDA, *disguised as a Pilgrim,*
amongst them.

FIRST PEASANT.

AYE, this was wont to be festal time
In days gone by ! I can remember well
The old familiar melodies that rose
At break of morn, from all our purple hills,
To welcome in the vintage. Never since
Hath music seem'd so sweet ! But the light hearts
Which to those measures beat so joyously
Are tamed to stillness now. There is no voice
Of joy through all the land.

SECOND PEASANT.

Yes ! there are sounds
Of revelry within the palaces,

And the fair castles of our ancient lords,
Where now the stranger banquets. Ye may hear,
From *thence* the peals of song and laughter rise
At midnight's deepest hour.

THIRD PEASANT.

Alas! we sat
In happier days, so peacefully beneath
The olives and the vines our fathers rear'd,
Encircled by our children, whose quick steps
Flew by us in the dance! The time hath been
When peace was in the hamlet, wheresoe'er
The storm might gather. But this yoke of France
Falls on the peasant's neck as heavily
As on the crested chieftain's. We are bow'd
E'en to the earth.

PEASANT'S CHILD.

My father, tell me when
Shall the gay dance and song again resound
Amidst our chesnut-woods, as in those days
Of which thou 'rt wont to tell the joyous tale?

FIRST PEASANT.

When there are light and reckless hearts once more
In Sicily's green vales. Alas! my boy,
Men meet not now to quaff the flowing bowl,

To hear the mirthful song, and cast aside
The weight of work-day care :—they meet, to speak
Of wrongs and sorrows, and to whisper thoughts
They dare not breathe aloud.

PROCIDA (*from the back-ground*).

Aye, it is well
So to relieve th' o'erburden'd heart, which pants
Beneath its weight of wrongs ; but better far
In silence to avenge them.

AN OLD PEASANT.

What deep voice
Came with that startling tone ?

FIRST PEASANT.

It was our guest's,
The stranger pilgrim, who hath sojourn'd here
Since yester-morn. Good neighbours, mark him well ;
He hath a stately bearing, and an eye
Whose glance looks through the heart. His mien accords
Ill with such vestments. How he folds round him
His pilgrim-cloak, e'en as it were a robe
Of knightly ermine ! That commanding step
Should have been used in courts and camps to move.
Mark him !

OLD PEASANT.

Nay, rather, mark him not : the times
Are fearful, and they teach the boldest hearts
A cautious lesson. What should bring him here ?

A YOUTH.

He spoke of vengeance !

OLD PEASANT.

Peace ! we are beset
By snares on every side, and we must learn
In silence and in patience to endure.
Talk not of vengeance, for the word is death.

PROCIDA (*coming forward indignantly.*)

The word is death ! And what hath life for *thee*,
That thou shouldst cling to it thus ? thou abject thing !
Whose very soul is moulded to the yoke,
And stamp'd with servitude. What ! is it life,
Thus at a breeze to start, to school thy voice
Into low fearful whispers, and to cast
Pale jealous looks around thee, lest, e'en then,
Strangers should catch its echo ?—Is there aught
In *this* so precious, that thy furrow'd cheek
Is blanch'd with terror at the passing thought
Of hazarding some few and evil days,
Which drag thus poorly on ?

SOME OF THE PEASANTS.

Away, away !

Leave us, for there is danger in thy presence.

PROCIDA.

Why, what is danger ?—Are there deeper ills
Than those ye bear thus calmly ? Ye have drain'd
The cup of bitterness, till nought remains
To fear or shrink from—therefore, be ye strong !
Power dwelleth with despair.—Why start ye thus
At words which are but echoes of the thoughts
Lock'd in your secret souls ?—Full well I know,
There is not one amongst you, but hath nursed
Some proud indignant feeling, which doth make
One conflict of his life. I know *thy* wrongs,
And thine—and thine,—but if within your breasts,
There is no chord that vibrates to *my* voice,
Then fare ye well.

A YOUTH (*coming forward*).

No, no ! say on, say on !

There are still free and fiery hearts e'en here,
That kindle at thy words.

PEASANT.

If that indeed

Thou hast a hope to give us.

PROCIDA.

There is hope
For all who suffer with indignant thoughts
Which work in silent strength. What ! think ye Heaven
O'erlooks th' oppressor, if he bear awhile
His crested head on high ?—I tell you, no !
Th' avenger will not sleep. It was an hour
Of triumph to the conqueror, when our king,
Our young brave Conradin, in life's fair morn,
On the red scaffold died. Yet not the less
Is justice throned above ; and her good time
Comes rushing on in storms : that royal blood
Hath lifted an accusing voice from earth,
And hath been heard. The traces of the past
Fade in *man's* heart, but ne'er doth Heaven forget.

PEASANT.

Had we but arms and leaders, we are men
Who might earn vengeance yet ; but wanting these,
What wouldst thou have us do ?

PROCIDA.

Be vigilant ;
And when the signal wakes the land, arise !
The peasant's arm is strong, and there shall be
A rich and noble harvest. Fare ye well.

[*Exit* PROCIDA.]

FIRST PEASANT.

This man should be a prophet : how he seem'd
To read our hearts with his dark searching glance
And aspect of command ! And yet his garb
Is mean as ours.

SECOND PEASANT.

Speak low ; I know him well.
At first his voice disturb'd me like a dream
Of other days ; but I remember now
His form, seen oft when in my youth I served
Beneath the banners of our kings. 'Tis he
Who hath been exiled and proscribed so long,
The Count di Procida.

PEASANT.

And is this he ?
Then Heaven protect him ! for around his steps
Will many snares be set.

FIRST PEASANT.

He comes not thus
But with some mighty purpose ; doubt it not :
Perchance to bring us freedom. He is one,
Whose faith, through many a trial, hath been proved
True to our native princes. But away !
The noon-tide heat is past, and from the seas

Light gales are wandering through the vineyards ; now
We may resume our toil.

[*Exeunt* PEASANTS.]

SCENE II.—*The Terrace of a Castle.*

ERIBERT. VITTORIA.

VITTORIA.

Have I not told thee, that I bear a heart
Blighted and cold ?—Th' affections of my youth
Lie slumbering in the grave ; their fount is closed,
And all the soft and playful tenderness
Which hath its home in woman's breast, ere yet
Deep wrongs have sear'd it ; all is fled from mine.
Urge me no more.

ERIBERT.

O lady ! doth the flower
That sleeps entomb'd through the long wintry storms
Unfold its beauty to the breath of spring ;
And shall not woman's heart, from chill despair,
Wake at love's voice ?

VITTORIA.

Love !—make *love's* name thy spell,
 And I am strong !—the very word calls up
 From the dark past, thoughts, feelings, powers, array'd
 In arms against thee !—Know'st thou *whom* I loved,
 While my soul's dwelling-place was still on earth ?
 One who was born for empire, and endow'd
 With such high gifts of princely majesty,
 As bow'd all hearts before him !—Was he not
 Brave, royal, beautiful ?—And such he died ;
 He died !—hast thou forgotten ?—And thou 'rt here,
 Thou meet'st my glance with eyes which coldly look'd,
 —Coldly !—nay, rather with triumphant gaze,
 Upon his murder !—Desolate as I am,
 Yet in the mien of *thine* affianced bride,
 Oh, my lost Conradin ! there should be still
 Somewhat of loftiness, which might o'erawe
 The hearts of thine assassins.

ERIBERT.

Haughty dame !
 If thy proud heart to tenderness be closed,
 Know, danger is around thee: thou hast foes
 That seek thy ruin, and my power alone
 Can shield thee from their arts.

VITTORIA.

Provençal, tell

Thy tale of danger to some happy heart,
Which hath its little world of loved ones round,
For whom to tremble ; and its tranquil joys
That make earth, Paradise. I stand alone ;
—They that are blest may fear.

ERIBERT.

Is there not one

Who ne'er commands in vain ?—proud lady, bend
Thy spirit to thy fate ; for know that he,
Whose car of triumph in its earthquake path
O'er the bow'd neck of prostrate Sicily,
Hath borne him to dominion ; he, my king,
Charles of Anjou, decrees thy hand the boon
My deeds have well deserved ; and who hath power
Against his mandates ?

VITTORIA.

Viceroy, tell thy lord,

That e'en where chains lie heaviest on the land,
Souls may not all be fetter'd. Oft, ere now,
Conquerors have rock'd the earth, yet fail'd to tame
Unto their purposes, that restless fire,
Inhabiting man's breast.—A spark bursts forth,

And so they perish !—'tis the fate of those
 Who sport with lightning—and it may be his.
 —Tell him I fear him not, and thus am free.

ERIBERT.

'Tis well. Then nerve that lofty heart to bear
 The wrath which is not powerless. Yet again
 Bethink thee, lady !—Love may change—*hath* chang'd
 To vigilant hatred oft, whose sleepless eye
 Still finds what most it seeks for. Fare thee well.
 —Look to it yet !—To-morrow I return.
[*Exit* ERIBERT.]

VITTORIA.

To-morrow !—Some ere now have slept, and dreamt
 Of morrows which ne'er dawn'd—or ne'er for them ;
 So silently their deep and still repose
 Hath melted into death !—Are there not balms
 In nature's boundless realm, to pour out sleep
 Like this, on me ?—Yet should my spirit still
 Endure its earthly bonds, till it could bear
 To *his* a glorious tale of his own isle,
 Free and avenged.—*Thou* should'st be now at work,
 In wrath, my native Etna ! who dost lift
 Thy spiry pillar of dark smoke so high,
 Through the red heaven of sunset !—sleep'st thou still,

With all thy founts of fire, while spoilers tread
The glowing vales beneath ?

(PROCIDA *enters disguised.*)

Ha ! who art thou,
Unbidden guest, that with so mute a step
Dost steal upon me ?

PROCIDA.

One, o'er whom hath pass'd
All that can change man's aspect !—Yet not long
Shalt thou find safety in forgetfulness.
—I am he, to breathe whose name is perilous,
Unless thy wealth could bribe the winds to silence.
—Know'st thou *this*, lady ?— [He shows a ring.

VITTORIA.

Righteous Heaven ! the pledge
Amidst his people from the scaffold thrown
By him who perish'd, and whose kingly blood
E'en yet is unatoned.—My heart beats high—
—Oh, welcome, welcome ! thou art Procida,
Th' Avenger, the Deliverer !

PROCIDA.

Call me so
When my great task is done. Yet who can tell

If the return'd *be* welcome?—Many a heart
Is changed since last we met.

VITTORIA.

Why dost thou gaze,
With such a still and solemn earnestness,
Upon my alter'd mien?

PROCIDA.

That I may read
If to the widow'd love of Conradin,
Or the proud Eribert's triumphant bride,
I now entrust my fate.

VITTORIA.

Thou, Procida!
That *thou* shouldst wrong me thus!—Prolong thy gaze
Till it hath found an answer.

PROCIDA.

'Tis enough.

I find it in thy cheek, whose rapid change
Is from death's hue to fever's; in the wild
Unsettled brightness of thy proud dark eye,
And in thy wasted form. Aye, 'tis a deep
And solemn joy, thus in thy looks to trace,
Instead of youth's gay bloom, the characters
Of noble suffering;—on thy brow the same

Commanding spirit holds its native state
Which could not stoop to vileness. Yet the voice
Of Fame hath told afar that thou shouldst wed
This tyrant, Eribert.

VITTORIA.

And told it not
A tale of insolent love repell'd with scorn,
Of stern commands and fearful menaces
Met with indignant courage?—Procida !
It was but now that haughtily I braved
His sovereign's mandate, which decrees my hand,
With its fair appanage of wide domains
And wealthy vassals, a most fitting boon,
To recompense his crimes.—I smiled—aye, smiled—
In proud security ! for the high of heart
Have still a pathway to escape disgrace,
Though it be dark and lone.

PROCIDA.

Thou shalt not need
To tread its shadowy mazes. Trust my words :
I tell thee, that a spirit is abroad,
Which will not slumber till its path be traced
By deeds of fearful fame. Vittoria, live !
It is most meet that thou *shouldst* live to see

The mighty expiation ; for thy heart
(Forgive me that I wrong'd its faith) hath nursed
A high, majestic grief, whose seal is set
Deep on thy marble brow.

VITTORIA.

Then thou *canst* tell,
By gazing on the wither'd rose, that there
Time, or the blight, hath work'd !—Aye, this is in
Thy vision's scope : but oh ! the things unseen,
Untold, undreamt of, which like shadows pass
Hourly o'er that mysterious world, a mind
To ruin struck by grief !—Yet doth my soul,
Far, 'midst its darkness, nurse one soaring hope,
Wherein is bright vitality.—'Tis to see
His blood aveng'd, and his fair heritage,
My beautiful native land, in glory risen,
Like a warrior from his slumbers !

PROCIDA.

Hear'st thou not
With what a deep and ominous moan, the voice
Of our great mountain swells ?—There will be soon
A fearful burst !—Vittoria ! brood no more
In silence o'er thy sorrows, but go forth
Amidst thy vassals, (yet be secret still)

And let thy breath give nurture to the spark
Thou 'lt find already kindled. I move on
In shadow, yet awakening in my path
That which shall startle nations. Fare thee well.

VITTORIA.

When shall we meet again?—Are we not those
Whom most he loved on earth, and think'st thou not
That love e'en yet shall bring his spirit near
While thus we hold communion?

PROCIDA.

Yes, I feel
Its breathing influence whilst I look on thee,
Who wert its light in life. Yet will we not
Make womanish tears our offering on his tomb ;
He shall have nobler tribute !—I must hence,
But thou shalt soon hear more. Await the time.

[Exeunt separately.]

SCENE III.—*The Sea Shore.*

RAIMOND DI PROCIDA. CONSTANCE.

CONSTANCE.

There is a shadow far within your eye,
Which hath of late been deepening. You were wont
Upon the clearness of your open brow
To wear a brighter spirit, shedding round
Joy, like our southern sun. It is not well,
If some dark thought be gathering o'er your soul,
To hide it from affection. Why is this,
My Raimond, why is this?

RAIMOND.

Oh ! from the dreams
Of youth, sweet Constance, hath not manhood still
A wild and stormy wakening?—They depart,
Light after light, our glorious visions fade,
The vaguely beautiful ! till earth, unveil'd,
Lies pale around ; and life's realities
Press on the soul, from its unfathom'd depth
Rousing the fiery feelings, and proud thoughts,

In all their fearful strength !—"Tis ever thus,
And doubly so with me ; for I awoke
With high aspirings, making it a curse
To breathe where noble minds are bow'd, as here.
—To breathe !—it is not breath !

CONSTANCE.

I know thy grief,
—And is 't not mine ?—for those devoted men
Doom'd with their life to expiate some wild word,
Born of the social hour. Oh ! I have knelt,
E'en at my brother's feet, with fruitless tears,
Imploring him to spare. His heart is shut
Against my voice ; yet will I not forsake
The cause of mercy.

RAIMOND.

Waste not thou thy prayers,
Oh, gentle love, for them. There 's little need
For Pity, though the galling chain be worn
By some few slaves the less. Let them depart !
There is a world beyond th' oppressor's reach,
And thither lies their way.

CONSTANCE.

Alas ! I see
That some new wrong hath pierced you to the soul.

RAIMOND.

Pardon, beloved Constance, if my words,
From feelings hourly stung, have caught, perchance,
A tone of bitterness.—Oh ! when thine eyes,
With their sweet eloquent thoughtfulness, are fix'd
Thus tenderly on mine, I should forget
All else in their soft beams ; and yet I came
To tell thee—

CONSTANCE.

What ? What wouldst thou say ? O speak !—
Thou wouldst not leave me !

RAIMOND.

I have cast a cloud,
The shadow of dark thoughts and ruin'd fortunes,
O'er thy bright spirit. Haply, were I gone,
Thou wouldst resume thyself, and dwell once more
In the clear sunny light of youth and joy,
E'en as before we met—before we loved !

CONSTANCE.

This is but mockery.—Well thou know'st thy love
Hath given me nobler being ; made my heart
A home for all the deep sublimities
Of strong affection ; and I would not change
Th' exalted life I draw from that pure source,

With all its chequered hues of hope and fear,
Ev'n for the brightest calm. Thou most unkind !
Have I deserved this ?

RAIMOND.

Oh ! thou hast deserved
A love less fatal to thy peace than mine.
Think not 'tis mockery !—But I cannot rest
To be the scorn'd and trampled thing I am
In this degraded land. Its very skies,
That smile as if but festivals were held
Beneath their cloudless azure, weigh me down
With a dull sense of bondage, and I pine
For freedom's charter'd air. I would go forth
To seek my noble father ; he hath been
Too long a lonely exile, and his name
Seems fading in the dim obscurity
Which gathers round my fortunes.

CONSTANCE.

Must we part ?

And is it come to this ?—Oh ! I have still
Deem'd it enough of joy with *thee* to share
E'en grief itself—and now—but this is vain ;
Alas ! too deep, too fond, is woman's love,

Too full of hope, she casts on troubled waves
The treasures of her soul !

RAIMOND.

Oh, speak not thus !
Thy gentle and desponding tones fall cold
Upon my inmost heart.—I leave thee but
To be more worthy of a love like thine.
For I have dreamt of fame !—A few short years,
And we may yet be blest.

CONSTANCE.

A few short years !
Less time may well suffice for death and fate
To work all change on earth !—To break the ties
Which early love had form'd ; and to bow down
Th' elastic spirit, and to blight each flower
Strewn in life's crowded path !—But be it so !
Be it enough to know that happiness
Meets thee on other shores.

RAIMOND.

Where'er I roam
Thou shalt be with my soul !—Thy soft low voice
Shall rise upon remembrance, like a strain
Of music heard in boyhood, bringing back
Life's morning freshness.—Oh ! that there should be

Things, which we love with such deep tenderness,
 But, through that love, to learn how much of woe
 Dwells in one hour like this!—Yet weep thou not!
 We shall meet soon ; and many days, dear love,
 Ere I depart.

CONSTANCE.

Then there 's a respite still.
 Days!—not a day but in its course may bring
 Some strange vicissitude to turn aside
 Th' impending blow we shrink from.—Fare thee well.
(*returning*)
 —Oh, Raimond ! this is not our *last* farewell ?
 'Thou wouldst not so deceive me ?

RAIMOND.

Doubt me not,
 Gentlest and best beloved ! we meet again.

[*Exit* CONSTANCE.

RAIMOND (*after a pause*).

When shall I breathe in freedom, and give scope
 To those untameable and burning thoughts,
 And restless aspirations, which consume
 My heart i' th' land of bondage?—Oh ! with you,
 Ye everlasting images of power,
 And of infinity ! thou blue-rolling deep,

And you, ye stars ! whose beams are characters
Wherewith the oracles of fate are traced ;
With you my soul finds room, and casts aside
The weight that doth oppress her.—But my thoughts
Are wandering far ; there should be one to share
This awful and majestic solitude
Of sea and heaven with me.

(PROCIDA enters unobserved.)

It is the hour

He named, and yet he comes not.

PROCIDA (*coming forward*).

He is here.

RAIMOND.

Now, thou mysterious stranger, thou, whose glance
Doth fix itself on memory, and pursue
Thought, like a spirit, haunting its lone hours ;
Reveal thyself ; what art thou ?

PROCIDA.

One, whose life
Hath been a troubled stream, and made its way
Through rocks and darkness, and a thousand storms,
With still a mighty aim.—But now the shades
Of eve are gathering round me, and I come
To this, my native land, that I may rest
Beneath its vines in peace.

RAIMOND.

Seek'st thou for peace ?

This is no land of peace ; unless that deep
And voiceless terror, which doth freeze men's thoughts
Back to their source, and mantle its pale mien
With a dull hollow semblance of repose,
May so be call'd.

PROCIDA.

There are such calms full oft
Preceding earthquakes. But I have not been
So vainly school'd by fortune, and inured
To shape my course on peril's dizzy brink,
That it should irk my spirit to put on
Such guise of hush'd submissiveness as best
May suit the troubled aspect of the times.

RAIMOND.

Why, then, thou art welcome, stranger ! to the land
Where most disguise is needful.—He were bold
Who now should wear his thoughts upon his brow
Beneath Sicilian skies. The brother's eye
Doth search distrustfully the brother's face ;
And friends, whose undivided lives have drawn
From the same past, their long remembrances,
Now meet in terror, or no more ; lest hearts

Full to o'erflowing, in their social hour,
 Should pour out some rash word, which roving winds
 Might whisper to our conquerors.—This it is,
 To wear a foreign yoke.

PROCIDA.

It matters not
 To him who holds the mastery o'er his spirit,
 And can suppress its workings, till endurance
 Becomes as nature. We can tame ourselves
 To all extremes, and there is that in life
 To which we cling with most tenacious grasp,
 Ev'n when its lofty claims are all reduced
 To the poor common privilege of breathing.—
 Why dost thou turn away ?

RAIMOND.

What wouldst thou with me ?
 I deem'd thee, by th' ascendant soul which lived,
 And made its throne on thy commanding brow,
 One of a sovereign nature, which would scorn
 So to abase its high capacities
 For aught on earth.—But thou art like the rest.
 What wouldst thou with me ?

PROCIDA.

I would counsel thee.
 Thou must do that which men—aye, valiant men,—

Hourly submit to do ; in the proud court,
And in the stately camp, and at the board
Of midnight revellers, whose flush'd mirth is all
A strife, won hardly.—Where is he, whose heart
Lies bare, through all its foldings, to the gaze
Of mortal eye ?—If vengeance wait the foe,
Or fate th' oppressor, 'tis in depths conceal'd
Beneath a smiling surface.—Youth ! I say
Keep thy soul down !—Put on a mask !—'tis worn
Alike by power and weakness, and the smooth
And specious intercourse of life requires
Its aid in every scene.

RAIMOND.

Away, dissembler !

Life hath its high and its ignoble tasks,
Fitted to every nature. Will the free
And royal eagle stoop to learn the arts
By which the serpent wins his spell-bound prey ?
It is because I *will* not clothe myself
In a vile garb of coward semblances,
That now, e'en now, I struggle with my heart,
To bid what most I love a long farewell,
And seek my country on some distant shore,
Where such things are unknown !

PROCIDA (*exultingly*).

Why, this is joy !

After long conflict with the doubts and fears,
And the poor subtleties of meaner minds,
To meet a spirit, whose bold elastic wing
Oppression hath not crush'd.—High-hearted youth !
Thy father, should his footsteps e'er again
Visit these shores—

RAIMOND.

My father ! what of him ?
Speak ! was he known to thee ?

PROCIDA.

In distant lands
With him I've traversed many a wild, and look'd
On many a danger ; and the thought that thou
Wert smiling then in peace, a happy boy,
Oft through the storm hath cheer'd him.

RAIMOND.

Dost thou deem
That still he lives ?—Oh ! if it be in chains,
In woe, in poverty's obscurest cell,
Say but he lives—and I will track his steps
E'en to the earth's verge !

PROCIDA.

It may be that he lives :
Though long his name hath ceased to be a word
Familiar in man's dwellings. But its sound
May yet be heard !—Raimond di Procida,
—Rememberest thou thy father ?

RAIMOND.

From my mind
His form hath faded long, for years have pass'd
Since he went forth to exile : but a vague,
Yet powerful, image of deep majesty,
Still dimly gathering round each thought of him,
Doth claim instinctive reverence ; and my love
For his inspiring name hath long become
Part of my being.

PROCIDA.

Raimond ! doth no voice
Speak to thy soul, and tell thee whose the arms
That would enfold thee now ?—My son ! my son !

RAIMOND.

Father !—Oh God !—my father ! Now I know
Why my heart woke before thee !

PROCIDA.

Oh ! this hour

Makes hope, reality ; for thou art all
My dreams had pictured thee !

RAIMOND.

Yet why so long,
Ev'n as a stranger, hast thou cross'd my paths,
One nameless and unknown ?—and yet I felt
Each pulse within me thrilling to thy voice.

PROCIDA.

Because I would not link thy fate with mine,
Till I could hail the day-spring of that hope
Which now is gathering round us.—Listen, youth !
Thou hast told *me* of a subdued, and scorn'd,
And trampled land, whose very soul is bow'd
And fashion'd to her chains : but *I* tell *thee*
Of a most generous and devoted land,
A land of kindling energies ; a land
Of glorious recollections !—proudly true
To the high memory of her ancient kings,
And rising, in majestic scorn, to cast
Her alien bondage off !

RAIMOND.

And where is this ?

PROCIDA.

Here, in our isle, our own fair Sicily !

Her spirit is awake, and moving on,
In its deep silence mightier, to regain
Her place amongst the nations ; and the hour
Of that tremendous effort is at hand.

RAIMOND.

Can it be thus indeed ?—Thou pour'st new life
Through all my burning veins !—I am as one
Awakening from a chill and death-like sleep
To the full glorious day.

PROCIDA.

Thou shalt hear more !
Thou shalt hear things which would,—which *will* arouse
The proud, free spirits of our ancestors
E'en from their marble rest. Yet mark me well !
Be secret !—for along my destin'd path
I yet must darkly move.—Now, follow me ;
And join a band of men, in whose high hearts
There lies a nation's strength.

RAIMOND.

My noble father !
Thy words have given me all for which I pined—
An aim, a hope, a purpose !—And the blood
Doth rush in warmer currents through my veins,

As a bright fountain from its icy bonds
By the quick sun-stroke freed.

PROCIDA.

Aye, this is well !

Such natures burst men's chains !—Now, follow me.

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.—*Apartment in a Palace.*

ERIBERT. CONSTANCE.

CONSTANCE.

Will you not hear me?—Oh ! that they who need
Hourly forgiveness, they who do but live,
While Mercy's voice, beyond th' eternal stars,
Wins the great Judge to listen, should be thus,
In their vain exercise of pageant power,
Hard and relentless !—Gentle brother, yet,
'Tis in your choice to imitate that Heaven
Whose noblest joy is pardon.

ERIBERT.

'Tis too late.

You have a soft and moving voice, which pleads
With eloquent melody—but they must die.

CONSTANCE.

What, die!—for words?—for breath, which leaves no
trace

To sully the pure air, wherewith it blends,
And is, being utter'd, gone?—Why, 'twere enough
For such a venial fault, to be deprived
One little day of man's free heritage,
Heaven's warm and sunny light!—Oh! if you deem
That evil harbours in their souls, at least
Delay the stroke, till guilt, made manifest,
Shall bid stern Justice wake.

ERIBERT.

I am not one
Of those weak spirits, that timorously keep watch
For fair occasions, thence to borrow hues
Of virtue for their deeds. My school hath been
Where power sits crown'd and arm'd.—And, mark me,
sister!
To a distrustful nature it might seem
Strange, that your lips thus earnestly should plead
For these Sicilian rebels. O'er *my* being
Suspicion holds no power.—And yet take note.
—I have said, and they must die.

CONSTANCE.

Have you no fear?

ERIBERT.

Of what?—that heaven should fall?

CONSTANCE.

No!—but that earth

Should arm in madness.—Brother! I have seen
Dark eyes bent on you, e'en 'midst festal throngs,
With such deep hatred settled in their glance,
My heart hath died within me.

ERIBERT.

Am I then

To pause, and doubt, and shrink, because a girl,
A dreaming girl, hath trembled at a look?

CONSTANCE.

Oh! looks are no illusions, when the soul,
Which may not speak in words, can find no way
But theirs, to liberty!—Have not these men
Brave sons, or noble brothers?

ERIBERT.

Yes! whose name

It rests with me to make a word of fear,
A sound forbidden 'midst the haunts of men.

CONSTANCE.

But not forgotten !—Ah ! beware, beware !
—Nay, look not sternly on me.—There is one
Of that devoted band, who yet will need
Years to be ripe for death. He is a youth,
A very boy, on whose unshaded cheek
The spring-time glow is lingering. 'Twas but now
His mother left me, with a timid hope
Just dawning in her breast ;—and I—I dared
To foster its faint spark.—You smile !—Oh ! then
He will be saved !

ERIBERT.

Nay, I but smiled to think
What a fond fool is hope !—She may be taught
To deem that the great sun will change his course
To work her pleasure ; or the tomb give back
Its inmates to her arms.—In sooth, 'tis strange !
Yet, with your pitying heart, you should not thus
Have mock'd the boy's sad mother—I have said,
You should not thus have *mock'd* her !—Now, farewell.

[*Exit* ERIBERT.]

CONSTANCE.

Oh, brother ! hard of heart !—for deeds like these
There must be fearful chastening, if on high

Justice doth hold her state.—And I must tell
Yon desolate mother, that her fair young son
Is thus to perish !—Haply the dread tale
May slay *her* too ;—for Heaven is merciful.
—’Twill be a bitter task !

[*Exit* CONSTANCE.]

SCENE II.—*A ruined Tower, surrounded by Woods.*

PROCIDA. VITTORIA.

PROCIDA.

Thy vassals are prepared then ?

VITTORIA.

Yes, they wait

Thy summons to their task.

PROCIDA.

Keep the flame bright,
But hidden, till its hour.—Wouldst thou dare, lady,
To join our councils at the night’s mid-watch,
In the lone cavern by the rock-hewn cross ?

VITTORIA.

What should I shrink from ?

PROCIDA.

Oh ! the forest-paths
Are dim and wild, e'en when the sunshine streams
Through their high arches : but when powerful night
Comes, with her cloudy phantoms, and her pale
Uncertain moonbeams, and the hollow sounds
Of her mysterious winds ; their aspect *then*
Is of another and more fearful world ;
A realm of indistinct and shadowy forms,
Wakening strange thoughts, almost too much for this,
Our frail terrestrial nature.

VITTORIA.

Well I know
All this, and more. Such scenes have been th' abodes
Where through the silence of my soul have pass'd
Voices, and visions from the sphere of those
That have to die no more !—Nay, doubt it not !
If such unearthly intercourse hath e'er
Been granted to our nature, 'tis to hearts
Whose love is with the dead. They, they alone,
Unmadden'd could sustain the fearful joy
And glory of its trances !—at the hour
Which makes guilt tremulous, and peoples earth

And air with infinite, viewless multitudes,
I will be with thee, Procida.

PROCIDA.

Thy presence
Will kindle nobler thoughts, and, in the souls
Of suffering and indignant men, arouse
That which may strengthen our majestic cause
With yet a deeper power.—Know'st thou the spot ?

VITTORIA.

Full well. There is no scene so wild and lone
In these dim woods, but I have visited
Its tangled shades.

PROCIDA.

At midnight then we meet.

[*Exit* PROCIDA.]

VITTORIA.

Why should I fear ?—Thou wilt be with me, thou,
Th' immortal dream and shadow of my soul,
Spirit of him I love ! that meet'st me still
In loneliness and silence ; in the noon
Of the wild night, and in the forest-depths,
Known but to me ; for whom thou giv'st the winds
And sighing leaves a cadence of thy voice,
Till my heart faints with that o'erthrilling joy !

—Thou wilt be with me there, and lend my lips
Words, fiery words, to flush dark cheeks with shame,
That thou art unavenged !

[*Exit* VITTORIA.]

SCENE III.—*A Chapel, with a Monument, on which is
laid a Sword.—Moonlight.*

PROCIDA. RAIMOND. MONTALBA.

MONTALBA.

And know you not my story ?

PROCIDA.

In the lands

Where I have been a wanderer, your deep wrongs
Were number'd with our country's ; but their tale
Came only in faint echoes to mine ear.
I would fain hear it now.

MONTALBA.

Hark ! while you spoke,
There was a voice-like murmur in the breeze,
Which ev'n like death came o'er me :—'twas a night
Like this, of clouds contending with the moon,

A night of sweeping winds, of rustling leaves,
And swift wild shadows floating o'er the earth,
Clothed with a phantom-life ; when, after years
Of battle and captivity, I spurred
My good steed homewards.—Oh ! what lovely dreams
Rose on my spirit !—There were tears and smiles,
But all of joy !—And there were bounding steps,
And clinging arms, whose passionate clasp of love
Doth twine so fondly round the warrior's neck,
When his plumed helm is doff'd.—Hence, feeble thoughts !
—I am sterner now, yet once such dreams were mine !

RAIMOND.

And were they realized ?

MONTALBA.

Youth ! Ask me not,
But listen !—I drew near my own fair home ;
There was no light along its walls, no sound
Of bugle pealing from the watch-tower's height
At my approach, although my trampling steed
Made the earth ring ; yet the wide gates were thrown
All open.—Then my heart misgave me first,
And on the threshold of my silent hall
I paused a moment, and the wind swept by
With the same deep and dirge-like tone which pierced

My soul e'en now.—I call'd—my struggling voice
Gave utterance to my wife's, my children's, names ;
They answer'd not—I roused my failing strength,
And wildly rush'd within—and they were there.

RAIMOND.

And was all well ?

MONTALBA.

Aye, well !—for death is well,
And they were all at rest !—I see them yet,
Pale in their innocent beauty, which had fail'd
To stay th' assassin's arm !

RAIMOND.

Oh, righteous Heaven !

Who had done this ?

MONTALBA.

Who !

PROCIDA.

Can'st thou question, *who* ?

Whom hath the earth to perpetrate such deeds,
In the cold-blooded revelry of crime,
But those whose yoke is on us ?

RAIMOND.

Man of woe !

What words hath pity for despair like thine ?

MONTALBA.

Pity !—fond youth !—My soul disdains the grief
Which doth unbosom its deep secrecies,
To ask a vain companionship of tears,
And so to be relieved !

PROCIDA.

For woes like these,
There is no sympathy but vengeance.

MONTALBA.

None !

Therefore I brought you hither, that your hearts
Might catch the spirit of the scene !—Look round !
We are in the awful presence of the dead ;
Within yon tomb *they* sleep, whose gentle blood
Weighs down the murderer's soul.—*They* sleep !—but I
Am wakeful o'er their dust !—I laid my sword,
Without its sheath, on their sepulchral stone,
As on an altar ; and th' eternal stars,
And heaven, and night, bore witness to my vow,
No more to wield it save in one great cause,
The vengeance of the grave !—And now the hour
Of that atonement comes !

(He takes the sword from the tomb.)

RAIMOND.

My spirit burns !

And my full heart almost to bursting swells.

—Oh ! for the day of battle !

PROCIDA.

Raimond ! they

Whose souls are dark with guiltless blood must die ;

—But not in battle.

RAIMOND.

How, my father !

PROCIDA.

No !

Look on that sepulchre, and it will teach

Another lesson.—But th' appointed hour

Advances.—Thou wilt join our chosen band,

Noble Montalba ?

MONTALBA.

Leave me for a time,

That I may calm my soul by intercourse

With the still dead, before I mix with men,

And with their passions. I have nursed for years,

In silence and in solitude, the flame

Which doth consume me ; and it is not used

Thus to be look'd or breathed on.—Procida !

I would be tranquil—or appear so—ere

I join your brave confederates. Through my heart

There struck a pang—but it will soon have pass'd.

PROCIDA.

Remember!—in the cavern by the cross.

Now, follow me, my son.

[*Exeunt PROCIDA and RAIMOND.*]

MONTALBA (*after a pause, leaning on the tomb*).

Said he, “*my son ?*”—Now, why should this man’s life

Go down in hope, thus resting on a son,

And I be desolate?—How strange a sound

Was that—“*my son !*”—I had a boy, who might

Have worn as free a soul upon his brow

As doth this youth.—Why should the thought of *him*

Thus haunt me?—when I tread the peopled ways

Of life again, I shall be pass’d each hour

By fathers with their children, and I must

Learn calmly to look on.—Methinks ’twere now

A gloomy consolation to behold

All men bereft, as I am!—But away,

Vain thoughts!—One task is left for blighted hearts,

And it shall be fulfill’d.

[*Exit MONTALBA.*]

SCENE IV.—*Entrance of a Cave, surrounded by Rocks and Forests. A rude Cross seen amongst the Rocks.*

PROCIDA. RAIMOND.

PROCIDA.

And is it thus, beneath the solemn skies
Of midnight, and in solitary caves,
Where the wild forest-creatures make their lair,—
Is 't thus the chiefs of Sicily must hold
The councils of their country!

RAIMOND.

Why, such scenes

In their primeval majesty, beheld
Thus by faint starlight, and the partial glare
Of the red-streaming lava, will inspire
Far deeper thoughts than pillar'd halls, wherein
Statesmen hold weary vigils.—Are we not
O'ershadow'd by that Etna, which of old
With its dread prophecies, hath struck dismay
Through tyrants' hearts, and bade them seek a home
In other climes?—Hark! from its depths e'en now
What hollow moans are sent!

Enter MONTALBA, GUIDO, and other SICILIANS.

PROCIDA.

Welcome, my brave associates!—We can share
The wolf's wild freedom here!—Th' oppressor's haunt
Is not 'midst rocks and caves. Are we all met?

SICILIANS.

All, all!

PROCIDA.

The torchlight, sway'd by every gust,
But dimly shows your features.—Where is he
Who from his battles had return'd to breathe
Once more, without a corslet, and to meet
The voices, and the footsteps, and the smiles,
Blent with his dreams of home?—Of that dark tale
The rest is known to vengeance!—Art thou here.
With thy deep wrongs and resolute despair,
Childless Montalba?

MONTALBA (*advancing*).

He is at thy side.

Call on that desolate father, in the hour
When his revenge is nigh.

PROCIDA.

Thou, too, come forth,
From thine own halls an exile !—Dost thou make
The mountain-fastnesses thy dwelling still,
While hostile banners, o'er thy rampart walls,
Wave their proud blazonry ?

FIRST SICILIAN.

Even so. I stood
Last night before my own ancestral towers
An unknown outcast, while the tempest beat
On my bare head—what reck'd it ?—There was joy
Within, and revelry ; the festive lamps
Were streaming from each turret, and gay songs,
I' th' stranger's tongue, made mirth. They little deem'd
Who heard their melodies !—but there are thoughts
Best nurtured in the wild ; there are dread vows
Known to the mountain-echoes.—Procida !
Call on the outcast when revenge is nigh.

PROCIDA.

I knew a young Sicilian, one whose heart
Should be all fire. On that most guilty day,
When, with our martyr'd Conradin, the flower
Of the land's knighthood perish'd ; he, of whom
I speak, a weeping boy, whose innocent tears

Melted a thousand hearts that dared not aid,
Stood by the scaffold, with extended arms,
Calling upon his father, whose last look
Turn'd full on him its parting agony.
That father's blood gush'd o'er him !—and the boy
Then dried his tears, and, with a kindling eye,
And a proud flush on his young cheek, look'd up
To the bright heaven.—Doth he remember still
That bitter hour ?

SECOND SICILIAN.

He bears a sheathless sword !
—Call on the orphan when revenge is nigh.

PROCIDA.

Our band shows gallantly—but there are men
Who should be with us now, had they not dared
In some wild moment of festivity
To give their full hearts way, and breathe a wish
For freedom !—and some traitor—it might be
A breeze perchance—bore the forbidden sound
To Eribert :—so they must die—unless
Fate (who at times is wayward) should select
Some other victim first !—But have they not
Brothers or sons amongst us ?

GUIDO.

Look on me !

I have a brother, a young high-soul'd boy,
And beautiful as a sculptor's dream, with brow
That wears, amidst its dark rich curls, the stamp
Of inborn nobleness. In truth, he is
A glorious creature !—But his doom is seal'd
With theirs of whom you spoke ; and I have knelt—
—Aye, scorn me not ! 'twas for his life—I knelt
E'en at the viceroy's feet, and he put on
That heartless laugh of cold malignity
We know so well, and spurn'd me.—But the stain
Of shame like this, takes blood to wash it off,
And *thus* it shall be cancell'd !—Call on me,
When the stern moment of revenge is nigh.

PROCIDA.

I call upon thee *now* ! The land's high soul
Is roused, and moving onward, like a breeze
Or a swift sunbeam, kindling nature's hues
To deeper life before it. In his chains,
The peasant dreams of freedom !—aye, 'tis thus
Oppression fans th' imperishable flame
With most unconscious hands.—No praise be her's
For what she blindly works !—When slavery's cup

O'erflows its bounds, the creeping poison, meant
To dull our senses, through each burning vein
Pours fever, lending a delirious strength
To burst man's fetters—and they *shall* be burst !
I have hoped, when hope seem'd frenzy ; but a power
Abides in human will, when bent with strong
Unswerving energy on one great aim,
To make and rule its fortunes !—I have been
A wanderer in the fulness of my years,
A restless pilgrim of the earth and seas,
Gathering the generous thoughts of other lands,
To aid our holy cause. And aid is near :
But we must give the signal. Now, before
The majesty of yon pure Heaven, whose eye
Is on our hearts, whose righteous arm befriends
The arm that strikes for freedom ; speak ! decree
The fate of our oppressors.

MONTALBA.

Let them fall
When dreaming least of peril !—When the heart,
Basking in sunny pleasure, doth forget
That hate may smile, but sleeps not.—Hide the sword
With a thick veil of myrtle, and in halls
Of banqueting, where the full wine-cup shines

Red in the festal torch-light ; meet we there,
And bid them welcome to the feast of death.

PROCIDA.

Thy voice is low and broken, and thy words
Scarce meet our ears.

MONTALBA.

Why, then, I thus repeat
Their import. Let th' avenging sword burst forth
In some free festal hour, and woe to him
Who first shall spare !

RAIMOND.

Must innocence and guilt
Perish alike ?

MONTALBA.

Who talks of innocence ?
When hath *their* hand been stay'd for innocence ?
Let them all perish !—Heaven will choose its own.
Why should *their* children live ?—The earthquake whelms
Its undistinguish'd thousands, making graves
Of peopled cities in its path—and this
Is Heaven's dread justice—aye, and it is well !
Why then should *we* be tender, when the skies
Deal thus with man ?—What, if the infant bleed ?
Is there not power to hush the mother's pangs ?

What, if the youthful bride perchance should fall
 In her triumphant beauty?—Should we pause?
 As if death were not mercy to the pangs
 Which make our lives the records of our foes?
 Let them all perish!—And if one be found
 Amidst our band, to stay th' avenging steel
 For pity, or remorse, or boyish love,
 Then be his doom as theirs! [*A pause.*

Why gaze ye thus?

Brethren, what means your silence?

SICILIANS.

Be it so!

If one amongst us stay th' avenging steel
 For love or pity, be his doom as theirs!
 Pledge we our faith to this!

RAIMOND (*rushing forward indignantly*).

Our faith to *this*!

No! I but *dreamt* I heard it!—Can it be?
 My countrymen, my father!—Is it thus
 That freedom should be won?—Awake! Awake
 To loftier thoughts!—Lift up, exultingly,
 On the crown'd heights, and to the sweeping winds,
 Your glorious banner!—Let your trumpet's blast
 Make the tombs thrill with echoes! Call aloud,

Proclaim from all your hills, the land shall bear
The stranger's yoke no longer !—What is he
Who carries on his practised lip a smile,
Beneath his vest a dagger, which but waits
Till the heart bounds with joy, to still its beatings ?
That which our nature's instinct doth recoil from,
And our blood curdle at—Aye, yours and mine—
A murderer !—Heard ye ?—Shall that name with ours
Go down to after days ?—Oh, friends ! a cause
Like that for which we rise, hath made bright names
Of the elder time as rallying-words to men,
Sounds full of might and immortality !
• And shall not ours be such ?

MONTALBA.

Fond dreamer, peace !
Fame ! What is fame ?—Will our unconscious dust
Start into thrilling rapture from the grave,
At the vain breath of praise ?—I tell thee, youth,
Our souls are parch'd with agonizing thirst,
Which must be quench'd though death were in the
draught :
We must have vengeance, for our foes have left
No other joy unblighted.

PROCIDA.

Oh ! my son,
The time is past for such high dreams as thine.
Thou know'st not whom we deal with. Knightly faith
And chivalrous honour, are but things whereon
They cast disdainful pity. We must meet
Falsehood with wiles, and insult with revenge.
And, for our names—whate'er the deeds, by which
We burst our bondage—is it not enough
That in the chronicle of days to come,
We, through a bright ' For Ever,' shall be call'd
The men who saved their country ?

RAIMOND.

Many a land
Hath bow'd beneath the yoke, and then arisen,
As a strong lion rending silken bouds,
And on the open field, before high Heaven,
Won such majestic vengeance, as hath made
Its name a power on earth.—Aye, nations own
It is enough of glory to be call'd
The children of the mighty, who redeem'd
Their native soil—but not by means like these.

MONTALBA.

I have no children.—Of Montalba's blood

Not one red drop doth circle through the veins
Of aught that breathes !—Why, what have *I* to do
With far futurity ?—My spirit lives
But in the past.—Away ! when thou dost stand
On this fair earth, as doth a blasted tree
Which the warm sun revives not, *then* return,
Strong in thy desolation : but, till then,
Thou art not for our purpose ; we have need
Of more unshrinking hearts.

RAIMOND.

Montalba, know,
I shrink from crime alone. Oh ! if my voice
Might yet have power amongst you, I would say,
Associates, leaders, *be* avenged ! but yet
As knights, as warriors !

MONTALBA.

Peace ! have we not borne
Th' indelible taint of contumely and chains ?
We *are not* knights and warriors.—Our bright crests
Have been defiled and trampled to the earth.
Boy ! we are slaves—and our revenge shall be
Deep as a slave's disgrace.

RAIMOND.

Why, then, farewell :

I leave you to your counsels. He that still
Would hold his lofty nature undebased,
And his name pure, were but a loiterer here.

PROCIDA.

And is it thus indeed?—dost *thou* forsake
Our cause, my son?

RAIMOND.

Oh, father! what proud hopes
This hour hath blighted!—yet, whate'er betide,
It is a noble privilege to look up
Fearless in heaven's bright face—and this is mine,
And shall be still.—

[*Exit* RAIMOND.]

PROCIDA.

He's gone!—Why, let it be!

I trust our Sicily hath many a son
Valiant as mine.—Associates! 'tis decreed
Our foes shall perish. We have but to name
The hour, the scene, the signal.

MONTALBA.

It should be

In the full city, when some festival
Hath gathered throngs, and lull'd infatuate hearts
To brief security. Hark! is there not

A sound of hurrying footsteps on the breeze ?
We are betray'd.—Who art thou ?

VITTORIA *enters.*

PROCIDA.

One alone
Should be thus daring. Lady, lift the veil
That shades thy noble brow.
(*She raises her veil, the Sicilians draw back with respect.*)

SICILIANS.

Th' affianced bride
Of our lost King !

PROCIDA.

And more, Montalba ; know
Within this form there dwells a soul as high,
As warriors in their battles e'er have proved,
Or patriots on the scaffold.

VITTORIA.

Valiant men !
I come to ask your aid. Ye see me, one
Whose widow'd youth hath all been consecrate
To a proud sorrow, and whose life is held
In token and memorial of the dead.

Say, is it meet that, lingering thus on earth,
But to behold one great atonement made,
And keep one name from fading in men's hearts,
A tyrant's will should force me to profane
Heaven's altar with unhallow'd vows—and live
Stung by the keen, unutterable scorn
Of my own bosom, live—another's bride ?

SICILIANS.

Never, oh never !—fear not, noble lady !
Worthy of Conradin !

VITTORIA.

Yet hear me still.

His bride, that Eribert's, who notes our tears
With his insulting eye of cold derision,
And, could he pierce the depths where feeling works,
Would number e'en our agonies as crimes.
—Say, is this meet ?

GUIDO.

We deem'd these nuptials, lady,
Thy willing choice ; but 'tis a joy to find
Thou art noble still. Fear not ; by all our wrongs
This shall not be.

PROCIDA.

Vittoria, thou art come

To ask *our* aid, but we have need of thine.
Know, the completion of our high designs
Requires—a festival ; and it must be
Thy bridal !

VITTORIA.

Procida !

PROCIDA.

Nay, start not thus.

'Tis no hard task to bind your raven hair
With festal garlands, and to bid the song
Rise, and the wine-cup mantle. No—nor yet
To meet your suitor at the glittering shrine,
Where death, not love, awaits him !

VITTORIA.

Can my soul

Dissemble thus ?

PROCIDA.

We have no other means
Of winning our great birthright back from those
Who have usurp'd it, than so lulling them
Into vain confidence, that they may deem
All wrongs forgot ;. and this may best be done
By what I ask of thee.

MONTALBA.

Then will we mix
With the flush'd revellers, making their gay feast
The harvest of the grave.

VITTORIA.

A bridal day !
—Must it be so?—Then, chiefs of Sicily,
I bid you to my nuptials ! but be there
With your bright swords unsheath'd, for thus alone
My guests should be adorn'd.

PROCIDA.

And let thy banquet
Be soon announced, for there are noble men
Sentenced to die, for whom we fain would purchase
Reprieve with other blood.

VITTORIA.

Be it then the day
Preceding that appointed for their doom.

GUIDO.

My brother, thou shalt live !—Oppression boasts
No gift of prophecy !—It but remains
To name our signal, chiefs !

MONTALBA.

The Vesper-bell.

PROCIDA.

Even so, the vesper-bell, whose deep-toned peal
Is heard o'er land and wave. Part of our band,
Wearing the guise of antic revelry,
Shall enter, as in some fantastic pageant,
The halls of Eribert ; and at the hour
Devoted to the sword's tremendous task,
I follow with the rest.—The vesper-bell !
That sound shall wake th' avenger ; for 'tis come,
The time when power is in a voice, a breath,
To burst the spell which bound us.—But the night
Is waning, with her stars, which, one by one,
Warn us to part. Friends, to your homes !—your *homes* ?
That name is yet to win.—Away, prepare
For our next meeting in Palermo's walls.
The Vesper-bell ! Remember !

SICILIANS.

Fear us not.

The Vesper-bell !

[*Exeunt omnes.*

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.—*Apartment in a Palace.*

ERIBERT. VITTORIA.

VITTORIA.

Speak not of love—it is a word with deep,
Strange magic in its melancholy sound,
To summon up the dead ; and they should rest,
At such an hour, forgotten. There are things
We must throw from us, when the heart would gather
Strength to fulfil its settled purposes :
Therefore, no more of love !—But, if to robe
This form in bridal ornaments, to smile
(I *can* smile yet) at thy gay feast, and stand
At th' altar by thy side ; if this be deem'd
Enough, it shall be done.

ERIBERT.

My fortune's star

Doth rule th' ascendant still ! (*Apart.*)—If not of love,
Then pardon, lady, that I speak of *joy*,
And with exulting heart——

VITTORIA.

There ~~is~~ no joy !

—Who shall look through the far futurity,
And, as the shadowy visions of events
Develope on his gaze, 'midst their dim throng,
Dare, with oracular mien, to point, and say,
“ This will bring happiness ? ”—Who shall do this ?
—Why, thou, and I, and all !—There's One, who sits
In his own bright tranquillity enthroned,
High o'er all storms, and looking far beyond
Their thickest clouds ; but we, from whose dull eyes
A grain of dust hides the great sun, e'en *we*
Usurp his attributes, and talk, as seers,
Of future joy and grief !

ERIBERT.

Thy words are strange.

Yet will I hope that peace at length shall settle
Upon thy troubled heart, and add soft grace
To thy majestic beauty.—Fair Vittoria !
Oh ! if my cares——

VITTORIA.

I know a day shall come
Of peace to all. Ev'n from my darken'd spirit
Soon shall each restless wish be exorcised,
Which haunts it now, and I shall then lie down
Serenely to repose. Of this no more.
—I have a boon to ask.

ERIBERT.

Command my power,
And deem it thus most honour'd.

VITTORIA.

Have I then
Soar'd such an eagle-pitch, as to command
The mighty Eribert?—And yet 'tis meet ;
For I bethink me now, I should have worn
A *crown* upon this forehead.—Generous lord !
Since thus you give me freedom, know, there is
An hour I have loved from childhood, and a sound,
Whose tones, o'er earth and ocean sweetly bearing
A sense of deep repose, have lull'd me oft
To peace—which is forgetfulness : I mean
The Vesper-bell. I pray you, let it be
The summons to our bridal—Hear you not?
To our fair bridal ?

ERIBERT.

Lady, let your will
Appoint each circumstance. I am but too bless'd
Proving my homage thus.

VITTORIA.

Why, then, 'tis mine
To rule the glorious fortunes of the day,
And I may be content. Yet much remains
For thought to brood on, and I would be left
Alone with my resolves. Kind Eribert !
(Whom I command so absolutely) now
Part we a few brief hours ; and doubt not, when
I am at thy side once more, but I shall stand
There—to the last.

ERIBERT.

Your smiles are troubled, lady ;
May they ere long be brighter !—Time will seem
Slow till the vesper-bell.

VITTORIA.

'Tis lovers' phrase
To say—time lags ; and therefore meet for you :
But with an equal pace the hours move on,
Whether they bear, on their swift silent wing,
Pleasure or—fate.

ERIBERT.

Be not so full of thought
On such a day.—Behold, the skies themselves
Look on my joy with a triumphant smile,
Unshadow'd by a cloud.

VITTORIA.

'Tis very meet
That Heaven (which loves the just) should wear a smile
In honour of his fortunes.—Now, my lord,
Forgive me if I say, farewell, until
Th' appointed hour.

ERIBERT.

Lady, a brief farewell.

[Exeunt separately.]

SCENE II.—*The Sea-shore.*

PROCIDA. RAIMOND.

PROCIDA.

And dost thou still refuse to share the glory
Of this, our daring enterprise?

RAIMOND.

Oh, father !

I too have dreamt of glory, and the word
Hath to my soul been as a trumpet's voice,
Making my nature sleepless.—But the deeds
Whereby 'twas won, the high exploits, whose tale
Bids the heart burn, were of another cast
Than such as thou requirest.

PROCIDA.

Every deed

Hath sanctity, if bearing for its aim
The freedom of our country ; and the sword
Alike is honour'd in the patriot's hand,
Searching, 'midst warrior-hosts, the heart which gave
Oppression birth ; or flashing through the gloom
Of the still chamber, o'er its troubled couch,
At dead of night.

RAIMOND (*turning away*).

There is no path but one
For noble natures.

PROCIDA.

Wouldst thou ask the man
Who to the earth hath dash'd a nation's chains,
Rent as with heaven's own lightning, by what *means*

The glorious end was won?—Go, swell th' acclaim !
Bid the deliverer, hail ! and if his path
To that most bright and sovereign destiny
Hath led o'er trampled thousands, be it call'd
A stern necessity, and not a crime ;

RAIMOND.

Father ! my soul yet kindles at the thought
Of nobler lessons, in my boyhood learn'd
Ev'n from thy voice.—The high remembrances
Of other days are stirring in the heart
Where *thou* didst plant them ; and they speak of men
Who needed no vain sophistry to gild
Acts, that would bear heaven's light.—And such be mine !
Oh, father ! is it yet too late to draw
The praise and blessing of all valiant hearts
On our most righteous cause ?

PROCIDA.

What wouldst thou do ?

RAIMOND.

I would go forth, and rouse th' indignant land
To generous combat. Why should freedom strike
Mantled with darkness ?—Is there not more strength
E'en in the waving of her single arm
Than hosts can wield against her ?—I would rouse

That spirit, whose fire doth press resistless on
To its proud sphere, the stormy field of fight !

PROCIDA.

Aye ! and give time and warning to the foe
To gather all his might !—It *is* too late.
There is a work to be this eve begun,
When rings the vesper-bell ! and, long before
To-morrow's sun hath reach'd i' th' noonday heaven
His throne of burning glory, every sound
Of the Provençal tongue within our walls,
As by one thunderstroke—(you are pale, my son)—
Shall be for ever silenced.

RAIMOND.

What ! such sounds
As falter on the lip of infancy
In its imperfect utterance ? or are breathed
By the fond mother, as she lulls her babe ?
Or in sweet hymns, upon the twilight air
Pour'd by the timid maid ?—Must all alike
Be still'd in death ; and wouldst thou tell my heart
There is no crime in *this* ?

PROCIDA.

Since thou dost feel

Such horror of our purpose, in thy power
Are means that might avert it.

RAIMOND.

Speak ! Oh speak !

PROCIDA.

How would those rescued thousands bless thy name
Shouldst thou betray us !

RAIMOND.

Father ! I can bear—

Aye, proudly woo—the keenest questioning
Of thy soul-gifted eye ; which almost seems
To claim a part of Heaven's dread royalty,
—The power that searches thought !

PROCIDA (*after a pause*).

Thou hast a brow

Clear as the day—and yet I doubt thee, Raimond !
Whether it be that I have learn'd distrust
From a long look through man's deep-folded heart ;
Whether my paths have been so seldom cross'd
By honour and fair mercy, that they seem
But beautiful deceptions, meeting thus
My unaccustom'd gaze ;—howe'er it be—
I doubt thee !—See thou waver not—take heed !
Time lifts the veil from all things !

[*Exit* PROCIDA.]

RAIMOND.

And 'tis thus

Youth fades from off our spirit ; and the robes
Of beauty and of majesty, wherewith
We clothed our idols, drop !—O ! bitter day,
When, at the crushing of our glorious world,
We start, and find men thus !—Yet be it so !
Is not my soul still powerful, in *itself*
To realize its dreams ?—Aye, shrinking not
From the pure eye of heaven, my brow may well
Undaunted meet my father's.—But, away !
Thou shalt be saved, sweet Constance !—Love is yet
Mightier than vengeance.

[*Exit* RAIMOND.]SCENE III.—*Gardens of a Palace.*CONSTANCE *alone.*

CONSTANCE.

There was a time when my thoughts wander'd not
Beyond these fairy scenes ; when, but to catch
The languid fragrance of the southern breeze

From the rich-flowering citrons, or to rest,
Dreaming of some wild legend, in the shade
Of the dark laurel-foliage, was enough
Of happiness.—How have these calm delights
Fled from before one passion, as the dews,
The delicate gems of morning, are exhaled
By the great sun !

(*RAIMOND enters.*)

Raimond ! oh ! now thou 'rt come,
I read it in thy look, to say farewell
For the last time—the last !

RAIMOND.

No, best beloved !
I come to tell thee there is now no power
To part us—but in death.

CONSTANCE.

I have dreamt of joy,
But never aught like this.—Speak yet again !
Say, we shall part no more !

RAIMOND.

No more, if love
Can strive with darker spirits, and he is strong
In his immortal nature ! all is changed
Since last we met. My father—keep the tale

Secret from all, and most of all, my Constance,
From Eribert—my father is return'd :
I leave thee not.

CONSTANCE.

Thy father ! blessed sound !
Good angels be his guard !—Oh ! if he knew
How my soul clings to thine, he could not hate
Even a Provençal maid !—Thy father !—now
Thy soul will be at peace, and I shall see
The sunny happiness of earlier days
Look from thy brow once more !—But how is this ?
Thine eye reflects not the glad soul of mine ;
And in thy look is that which ill befits
A tale of joy.

RAIMOND.

A dream is on my soul.
I see a slumberer, crown'd with flowers, and smiling
As in delighted visions, on the brink
Of a dread chasm ; and this strange phantasy
Hath cast so deep a shadow o'er my thoughts,
I cannot but be sad.

CONSTANCE.

Why, let me sing

One of the sweet wild strains you love so well,
And this will banish it.

RAIMOND.

It may not be.

Oh ! gentle Constance, go not forth to-day :
Such dreams are ominous.

CONSTANCE.

Have you then forgot
My brother's nuptial feast ?—I must be one
Of the gay train attending to the shrine
His stately bride. In sooth, my step of joy
Will print earth lightly now.—What fear'st thou, love ?
Look all around ! these blue transparent skies,
And sun-beams pouring a more buoyant life
Through each glad thrilling vein, will brightly chase
All thought of evil.—Why, the very air
Breathes of delight !—Through all its glowing realms
Doth music blend with fragrance, and e'en here
The city's voice of jubilee is heard
Till each light leaf seems trembling unto sounds
Of human joy !

RAIMOND.

There lie far deeper things,—
Things, that may darken thought for life, beneath

That city's festive semblance.—I have pass'd
Through the glad multitudes, and I have mark'd
A stern intelligence in meeting eyes,
Which deem'd their flash unnoticed, and a quick,
Suspicious vigilance, too intent to clothe
Its mien with carelessness ; and, now and then,
A hurrying start, a whisper, or a hand
Pointing by stealth to some one, singled out
Amidst the reckless throng. O'er all is spread
A mantling flush of revelry, which may hide
Much from unpractised eyes ; but lighter signs
Have been prophetic oft.

CONSTANCE.

I tremble !—Raimond !

What may these things portend ?

RAIMOND.

It was a day

Of festival, like this ; the city sent
Up through her sunny firmament a voice
Joyous as now ; when, scarcely heralded
By one deep moan, forth from his cavernous depths
The earthquake burst ; and the wide splendid scene
Became one chaos of all fearful things,
Till the brain whirl'd, partaking the sick motion
Of rocking palaces.

CONSTANCE.

And then didst thou,
My noble Raimond ! through the dreadful paths
Laid open by destruction, past the chasms,
Whose fathomless clefts, a moment's work, had given
One burial unto thousands, rush to save
Thy trembling Constance ! she who lives to bless
Thy generous love, that still the breath of heaven
Wafts gladness to her soul !

RAIMOND.

Heaven !—Heaven is just !
And being so, must guard thee, sweet one, still.
Trust none beside.—Oh ! the omnipotent skies
Make their wrath manifest, but insidious *man*
Doth compass those he hates with *secret* snares,
Wherein lies fate. Know, danger walks abroad,
Mask'd as a reveller. Constance ! oh ! by all
Our tried affection ; all the vows which bind
Our hearts together, meet me in these bowers,
Here, I adjure thee, meet me, when the bell
Doth sound for vesper-prayer !

CONSTANCE.

And know'st thou not
'Twill be the bridal hour ?

RAIMOND.

It will not, love !
That hour will bring no bridal !—Nought of this
To human ear ; but speed thou hither, fly,
When evening brings that signal.—Dost thou heed ?
This is no meeting, by a lover sought
To breathe fond tales, and make the twilight groves
And stars, attest his vows ; deem thou not so,
Therefore denying it !—I tell thee, Constance !
If thou wouldst save me from such fierce despair
As falls on man, beholding all he loves
Perish before him, while his strength can but
Strive with his agony—thou 'lt meet me then ?
Look on me, love !—I am not oft so moved—
Thou 'lt meet me ?

CONSTANCE.

Oh ! what mean thy words ?—If then
My steps are free,—I will. Be thou but calm.

RAIMOND.

Be calm !—there is a cold and sullen calm,
And, were my wild fears made realities,
It might be mine ; but, in this dread suspense,
This conflict of all terrible phantasies,
There is no calm.—Yet fear thou not, dear love !

I will watch o'er thee still. And now, farewell
Until that hour !

CONSTANCE.

My Raimond, fare thee well.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Room in the Citadel of Palermo.*

ALBERTI. DE COUCI.

DE COUCI.

Said'st thou this night ?

ALBERTI.

This very night—and lo !

E'en now the sun declines.

DE COUCI.

What ! are they arm'd ?

ALBERTI.

All arm'd, and strong in vengeance and despair.

DE COUCI.

Doubtful and strange the tale ! Why was not this
Reveal'd before ?

ALBERTI.

Mistrust me not, my lord !

That stern and jealous Procida hath kept
O'er all my steps (as though he did suspect
The purposes, which oft his eye hath sought
To read in mine,) a watch so vigilant,
I knew not how to warn thee, though for this
Alone I mingled with his bands, to learn
Their projects and their strength. Thou know'st my faith
To Anjou's house full well.

DE COUCI.

How may we now
Avert the gathering storm ?—The viceroy holds
His bridal feast, and all is revelry.
—'Twas a true-boding heaviness of heart
Which kept me from these nuptials.

ALBERTI.

Thou thyself
Mayst yet escape, and, haply of thy bands
Rescue a part, ere long to wreak full vengeance
Upon these rebels. 'Tis too late to dream
Of saving Eribert. E'en shouldst thou rush
Before him with the tidings, in his pride
And confidence of soul, he would but laugh
Thy tale to scorn.

DE COUCI.

He must not die unwarn'd,
Though it be all in vain. But thou, Alberti,
Rejoin thy comrades, lest thine absence wake
Suspicion in their hearts. Thou hast done well,
And shalt not pass unguerdon'd, should I live
Through the deep horrors of th' approaching night.

ALBERTI.

Noble De Couci, trust me still. Anjou
Commands no heart more faithful than Alberti's.

[*Exit* ALBERTI.]

DE COUCI.

The grovelling slave !—And yet he spoke too true !
For Eribert, in blind elated joy,
Will scorn the warning voice.—The day wanes fast,
And through the city, recklessly dispersed,
Unarm'd and unprepared, my soldiers revel,
E'en on the brink of fate.—I must away.

[*Exit* DE COUCI.]

SCENE V.—*A Banqueting Hall.*PROVENÇAL NOBLES *assembled.*

FIRST NOBLE.

Joy be to this fair meeting !—Who hath seen
The viceroy's bride ?

SECOND NOBLE.

I saw her, as she pass'd
The gazing throngs assembled in the city.
'Tis said she hath not left for years, till now,
Her castle's wood-girt solitude. 'Twill gall
These proud Sicilians, that her wide domains
Should be the conqueror's guerdon.

THIRD NOBLE.

'Twas their boast
With what fond faith she worshipp'd still the name
Of the boy, Conradin. How will the slaves
Brook this new triumph of their lords ?

SECOND NOBLE.

In sooth
It stings them to the quick. In the full streets

They mix with our Provençals, and assume
A guise of mirth, but it sits hardly on them.
'Twere worth a thousand festivals, to see
With what a bitter and unnatural effort
They strive to smile !

FIRST NOBLE.

Is this Vittoria fair ?

SECOND NOBLE.

Of a most noble mien ; but yet her beauty
Is wild and awful, and her large dark eye,
In its unsettled glances, hath strange power,
From which thou 'lt shrink, as I did.

FIRST NOBLE.

Hush ! they come.

Enter ERIBERT, VITTORIA, CONSTANCE, and others.

ERIBERT.

Welcome, my noble friends !—there must not lower
One clouded brow to-day in Sicily !
Behold my bride !

NOBLES.

Receive our homage, lady !

VITTORIA.

I bid all welcome. May the feast we offer
Prove worthy of such guests !

ERIBERT.

Look on her, friends !
And say, if that majestic brow is not
Meet for a diadem ?

VITTORIA.

'Tis well, my lord !
When memory's pictures fade, 'tis kindly done
To brighten their dimm'd hues !

FIRST NOBLE (*apart*).

Mark'd you her glance ?

SECOND NOBLE (*apart*).

What eloquent scorn was there ! yet he, th' elate
Of heart, perceives it not.

ERIBERT.

Now to the feast !
Constance, you look not joyous. I have said
That all should smile to-day.

CONSTANCE.

Forgive me, brother !
The heart is wayward, and its garb of pomp
At times oppresses it.

ERIBERT.

Why, how is this ?

CONSTANCE.

Voices of woe, and prayers of agony
Unto my soul have risen, and left sad sounds
There echoing still. Yet would I fain be gay,
Since 'tis your wish.—In truth, I should have been
A village-maid !

ERIBERT.

But, being as you are,
Not thus ignobly free, command your looks
(They may be taught obedience) to reflect
The aspect of the time.

VITTORIA.

And know, fair maid !
That if in this unskill'd, you stand alone
Amidst our court of pleasure.

ERIBERT.

To the feast !

Now let the red wine foam !—There should be mirth
When conquerors revel !—Lords of this fair isle !
Your good swords' heritage, crown each bowl, and pledge
The present and the future ! for they both
Look brightly on us. Dost thou smile, my bride ?

VITTORIA.

Yes, Eribert !—thy prophecies of joy
Have taught e'en me to smile.

ERIBERT.

'Tis well. To day
I have won a fair and almost *royal* bride ;
To-morrow—let the bright sun speed his course,
To waft me happiness !—my proudest foes
Must die—and then my slumber shall be laid
On rose-leaves, with no envious fold, to mar
The luxury of its visions !—Fair Vittoria,
Your looks are troubled !

VITTORIA.

It is strange, but oft,
'Midst festal songs and garlands, o'er my soul
Death comes, with some dull image ! as you spoke
Of those whose blood is claim'd, I thought for them
Who, in a darkness thicker than the night
E'er wove with all her clouds, have pined so long :
How blessed were the stroke which makes them things
Of that invisible world, wherein, we trust,
There is, at least, no bondage !—But should *we*
From such a scene as this, where all earth's joys
Contend for mastery, and the very sense

Of life is rapture ; should *we* pass, I say,
At once from such excitements to the void
And silent gloom of that which doth await us—
—Were it not dreadful ?

ERIBERT.

Banish such dark thoughts !
They ill beseem the hour.

VITTORIA.

There is no hour
Of this mysterious world, in joy or woe,
But they beseem it well !—Why, what a slight,
Impalpable bound is that, th' unseen, which severs
Being from death !—And who can tell how near
Its misty brink he stands ?

FIRST NOBLE (*aside*).

What mean her words ?

SECOND NOBLE.

There 's some dark mystery here.

ERIBERT.

No more of this !
Pour the bright juice which Etna's glowing vines
Yield to the conquerors ! And let music's voice
Dispel these ominous dreams !—Wake, harp and song !
Swell out your triumph !

(A MESSENGER enters, bearing a letter.)

MESSENGER.

Pardon, my good lord !

But this demands——

ERIBERT.

What means thy breathless haste ?

And that ill-boding mien ?—Away ! such looks

Befit not hours like these.

MESSENGER.

The Lord De Couci

Bade me bear this, and say, 'tis fraught with tidings

Of life and death.

VITTORIA (*hurriedly*).

Is this a time for aught

But revelry ?—My lord, these dull intrusions

Mar the bright spirit of the festal scene !

ERIBERT (*to the MESSENGER*).

Hence ! tell the Lord De Couci we will talk

Of life and death to-morrow.

[*Exit* MESSENGER.

Let there be

Around me none but joyous looks to-day,
And strains whose very echoes wake to mirth !

*(A band of the conspiritors enter, to the sound
of music, disguised as shepherds, bacchanals,
&c.)*

ERIBERT.

What forms are these ?—What means this antic triumph ?

VITTORIA.

'Tis but a rustic pageant, by my vassals
Prepared to grace our bridal. Will you not
Hear their wild music ? Our Sicilian vales
Have many a sweet and mirthful melody,
To which the glad heart bounds.—Breathe ye some strain
Meet for the time, ye sons of Sicily !

(One of the Masquers sings.)

The festal eve, o'er earth and sky,
In her sunset robe, looks bright,
And the purple hills of Sicily,
With their vineyards, laugh in light ;

From the marble cities of her plains
 Glad voices mingling swell ;
 —But with yet more loud and lofty strains,
 They shall hail the Vesper-bell !

Oh ! sweet its tones, when the summer breeze
 Their cadence wafts afar,
 To float o'er the blue Sicilian seas,
 As they gleam to the first pale star !
 The shepherd greets them on his height,
 The hermit in his cell ;
 —But a deeper power shall breathe, to-night,
 In the sound of the vesper-bell !

[The Bell rings.]

ERIBERT.

—It is the hour !—Hark, hark !—my bride, our summons !

The altar is prepared and crown'd with flowers
 That wait—

VITTORIA.

The victim !

(A tumult heard without.)

PROCIDA and MONTALBA enter, with others, armed.

PROCIDA.

Strike ! the hour is come !

VITTORIA.

Welcome, avengers, welcome ! Now, be strong !

*(The Conspirators throw off their disguise, and rush
with their Swords drawn, upon the Provençals.
ERIBERT is wounded, and falls.)*

PROCIDA.

Now hath fate reach'd thee in thy mid career,
Thou reveller in a nation's agonies !

*(The Provençals are driven off, and pursued by the
Sicilians.)*

CONSTANCE (supporting ERIBERT).

My brother ! oh ! my brother !

ERIBERT.

Have I stood

A leader in the battle-fields of kings,

To perish thus at last ?—Aye, by these pangs,
And this strange chill, that heavily doth creep,
Like a slow poison, through my curdling veins,
This should be—death !—In sooth a dull exchange
For the gay bridal feast !

VOICES (*without*).

Remember Conradin !—spare none, spare none !

VITTORIA (*throwing off her bridal wreath and
ornaments*).

This is proud freedom ! Now my soul may cast,
In generous scorn, her mantle of dissembling
To earth forever !—And it is such joy,
As if a captive, from his dull, cold cell,
Might soar at once on charter'd wing to range
The realms of starr'd infinity !—Away !
Vain mockery of a bridal wreath ! The hour
For which stern patience ne'er kept watch in vain
Is come ; and I may give my bursting heart
Full and indignant scope.—Now, Eribert !
Believe in retribution ! What, proud man !
Prince, ruler, conqueror ! didst thou deem Heaven slept ?
“ Or that the unseen, immortal ministers,
Ranging the world, to note e'en purposed crime
In burning characters, had laid aside

Their everlasting attributes for *thee* ? ”

—Oh ! blind security !—He, in whose dread hand
The lightnings vibrate, holds them back, until
The trampler of this goodly earth hath reach'd
His pyramid-height of power ; that so his fall
May, with more fearful oracles, make pale
Man's crown'd oppressors !

CONSTANCE.

Oh ! reproach him not !

His soul is trembling on the dizzy brink
Of that dim world where passion may not enter.
Leave him in peace !

VOICES (*without*).

Anjou, Anjou !—De Couci to the rescue !

ERIBERT (*half-raising himself*).

My brave Provençals ! do ye combat still ?
And I, your chief, am here !—Now, now I feel
That death indeed is bitter !

VITTORIA.

Fare thee well !

Thine eyes so oft, with their insulting smile,
Have looked on man's last pangs, thou shouldst, by this,
Be perfect how to die !

[*Exit* VITTORIA.]

RAIMOND *enters.*

RAIMOND.

Away, my Constance !

Now is the time for flight. Our slaughtering bands
Are scatter'd far and wide. A little while
And thou shalt be in safety. Know'st thou not
That low sweet vale, where dwells the holy man,
Anselmo ? He whose hermitage is rear'd
'Mid some old temple's ruins ?—Round the spot
His name hath spread so pure and deep a charm,
'Tis hallow'd as a sanctuary, wherein
Thou shalt securely bide, till this wild storm
Have spent its fury. Haste !

CONSTANCE.

I will not fly !

While in his heart there is one throb of life,
One spark in his dim eyes, I will not leave
The brother of my youth to perish thus,
Without one kindly bosom to sustain
His dying head.

ERIBERT.

The clouds are darkening round.

There are strange voices ringing in mine ear
 That summon me—to what?—But I have been
 Used to command!—Away! I will not die
 But on the field—

[*He dies.*]

CONSTANCE (*kneeling by him*).

Oh Heaven! be merciful,
 As thou art just!—for he is now where nought
 But mercy can avail him!—It is past!

GUIDO *enters, with his sword drawn.*

GUIDO (*to RAIMOND*).

I've sought thee long—Why art thou lingering here?
 Haste, follow me!—Suspicion with thy name
 Joins that word—*Traitor*?

RAIMOND.

Traitor!—Guido?

GUIDO.

Yes!

Hast thou not heard that, with his men-at-arms,
 After vain conflict with a people's wrath,
 De Couci hath escaped?—And there are those
 Who murmur that from *thee* the warning came
 Which saved him from our vengeance. But e'en yet

In the red current of Provençal blood
That doubt may be effaced. Draw thy good sword,
And follow me !

RAIMOND.

And *thou* couldst doubt me, Guido !
’Tis come to this !—Away ! mistrust me still.
I will not stain my sword with deeds like thine.
Thou know’st me not !

GUIDO.

Raimond di Procida !
If thou art he whom once I deemed so noble—
Call me thy friend no more !

[*Exit* GUIDO.]

RAIMOND (*after a pause*).

Rise, dearest, rise !
Thy duty’s task hath nobly been fulfill’d,
E’en in the face of death ; but all is o’er,
And this is now no place where nature’s tears
In quiet sanctity may freely flow.
—Hark ! the wild sounds that wait on fearful deeds
Are swelling on the winds, as the deep roar
Of fast-advancing billows ; and for *thee*
I shame not thus to tremble.—Speed, oh, speed !

[*Exeunt*.]

END OF ACT THE THIRD.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Palermo.*PROCIDA *enters.*

PROCIDA.

How strange and deep a stillness loads the air,
As with the power of midnight !—Aye, where death
Hath pass'd, there should be silence.—But this hush
Of nature's heart, this breathlessness of all things,
Doth press on thought too heavily, and the sky,
With its dark robe of purple thunder-clouds
Brooding in sullen masses, o'er my spirit
Weighs like an omen !—Wherefore should this be ?
Is not our task achieved, the mighty work
Of our deliverance ?—Yes ; I should be joyous :
But this our feeble nature, with its quick
Instinctive superstitions, will drag down
Th' ascending soul.—And I have fearful bodings

That treachery lurks amongst us.—Raimond ! Raimond !
Oh ! Guilt ne'er made a mien like his its garb !
It cannot be !

MONTALBA, GUIDO, *and other Sicilians enter.*

PROCIDA.

Welcome ! we meet in joy !
Now may we bear ourselves erect, resuming
The kingly port of freemen ! Who shall dare,
After this proof of slavery's dread recoil,
To weave us chains again ?—Ye have done well.

MONTALBA.

We *have* done well. There need no choral song,
No shouting multitudes to blazon forth
Our stern exploits.—The *silence* of our foes
Doth vouch enough, and they are laid to rest
Deep as the sword could make it. Yet our task
Is still but half achieved, since, with his bands,
De Couci hath escaped, and, doubtless, leads
Their footsteps to Messina, where our foes
Will gather all their strength. Determined hearts,
And deeds to startle earth, are yet required,

To make the mighty sacrifice complete.—
Where is thy son ?

PROCIDA.

I know not. Once last night
He cross'd my path, and with one stroke beat down
A sword just raised to smite me, and restored
My own, which in that deadly strife had been
Wrench'd from my grasp : but when I would have press'd
him

To my exulting bosom, he drew back,
And with a sad, and yet a scornful, smile,
Full of strange meaning, left me. Since that hour
I have not seen him. Wherefore didst thou ask ?

MONTALBA.

It matters not. We have deeper things to speak of.—
Know'st thou that we have traitors in our councils ?

PROCIDA.

I know some voice in secret must have warn'd
De Couci ; or his scatter'd bands had ne'er
So soon been marshall'd, and in close array
Led hence as from the field. Hast thou heard aught
That may develope this ?

MONTALBA.

The guards we set

To watch the city-gates have seized, this morn,
 One whose quick fearful glance, and hurried step
 Betray'd his guilty purpose. Mark ! he bore
 (Amidst the tumult deeming that his flight
 Might all unnoticed pass) these scrolls to him,
 The fugitive Provençal. Read and judge !

PROCIDA.

Where is this messenger ?

MONTALBA.

Where *should* he be ?—

They slew him in their wrath.

PROCIDA.

Unwisely done !

Give me the scrolls.

[*He reads.*

Now, if there be such things
 As may to death add sharpness, yet delay
 The pang which gives release ; if there be power
 In execration, to call down the fires
 Of yon avenging heaven, whose rapid shafts
 But for such guilt were aimless ; be they heap'd
 Upon the traitor's head !—Scorn make his name
 Her mark for ever !

MONTALBA.

In our passionate blindness,

We send forth curses, whose deep stings recoil
Oft on ourselves.

PROCIDA.

Whate'er fate hath of ruin
Fall on his house!—What! to resign again
That freedom for whose sake our souls have now
Engrain'd themselves in blood!—Why, who is he
That hath devised this treachery?—To the scroll
Why fix'd he not his name, so stamping it
With an immortal infamy, whose brand
Might warn men from him?—Who should be so vile?
Alberti?—In his eye is that which ever
Shrinks from encountering mine!—But no! his race
Is of our noblest—Oh! he could not shame
That high descent!—Urbino?—Conti?—No!
They are too deeply pledged.—There's one name more!
—I cannot utter it!—Now shall I read
Each face with cold suspicion, which doth blot
From man's high mien its native royalty,
And seal his noble forehead with the impress
Of its own vile imaginings!—Speak your thoughts,
Montalba! Guido!—Who should this man be?

MONTALBA.

Why what Sicilian youth unsheath'd, last night,

His sword to aid our foes, and turn'd its edge
Against his country's chiefs?—He that did *this*,
May well be deem'd for guiltier treason ripe.

PROCIDA.

And who is he?

MONTALBA.

Nay, ask thy son.

PROCIDA.

My son!

What should *he* know of such a recreant heart?
Speak, Guido! thou'rt his friend!

GUIDO.

I would not wear

The brand of such a name!

PROCIDA.

How! what means this?

A flash of light breaks in upon my soul!
Is it to blast me?—Yet the fearful doubt
Hath crept in darkness through my thoughts before,
And been flung from them.—Silence!—Speak not yet!
I would be calm, and meet the thunder-burst
With a strong heart. *(A pause.*

Now, what have I to hear?

Your tidings?

GUIDO.

Briefly, 'twas your son did thus ;
He hath disgraced your name.

PROCIDA.

My son did thus !

—Are thy words oracles, that I should search
Their hidden meaning out ?—*What* did my son ?
I have forgot the tale.—Repeat it, quick !

GUIDO.

'Twill burst upon thee all too soon. While we
Were busy at the dark and solemn rites
Of retribution ; while we bathed the earth
In red libations, which will consecrate
The soil they mingled with to freedom's step
Through the long march of ages ; 'twas *his* task
To shield from danger a Provençal maid,
Sister of him whose cold oppression stung
Our hearts to madness.

MONTALBA.

What ! should she be spared
To keep that name from perishing on earth ?
—I cross'd them in their path, and raised my sword
To smite her in her champion's arms.—We fought—

The boy disarm'd me !—And I live to tell
My shame, and wreak my vengeance !

GUIDO.

Who but he
Could warn De Couci, or devise the guilt
These scrolls reveal ?—Hath not the traitor still
Sought, with his fair and specious eloquence,
To win us from our purpose ?—All things seem
Leagued to unmask him.

MONTALBA.

Know you not there came,
E'en in the banquet's hour, from this De Couci,
One, bearing unto Eribert the tidings
Of all our purposed deeds ?—And have we not
Proof, as the noon-day clear, that Raimond loves
The sister of that tyrant ?

PROCIDA.

There was one
Who mourn'd for being childless !—Let him now
Feast o'er his children's graves, and I will join
The revelry !

MONTALBA (*apart*).

You shall be childless too !

PROCIDA.

Was 't you, Montalba?—Now rejoice ! I say.
There is no name so near you that its stains
Should call the fever'd and indignant blood
To your dark cheek !—But I will dash to earth
The weight that presses on my heart, and then
Be glad as thou art.

MONTALBA.

What means this, my lord ?
Who hath seen gladness on Montalba's mien ?

PROCIDA.

Why, should not all be glad who have no *sons*
To tarnish their bright name ?

MONTALBA.

I am not used
To bear with mockery.

PROCIDA.

Friend ! By yon high heaven,
I mock thee not !—'tis a proud fate, to live
Alone and unallied.—Why, what 's alone ?
A word whose sense is—*free* !—Aye, free from all
The venom'd stings implanted in the heart
By those it loves.—Oh ! I could laugh to think
O' th' joy that riots in baronial halls,

When the word comes—"A son is born!"—A *son*!
 —They should say thus—"He that shall knit your brow
 To furrows, not of years; and bid your eye
 Quail its proud glance; to tell the earth its shame,—
 Is born, and so, rejoice!"—*Then* might we feast,
 And know the cause:—Were it not excellent?

MONTALBA.

This is all idle. There are deeds to do;
 Arouse thee, Procida!

PROCIDA.

Why, am I not
 Calm as immortal justice?—She can strike,
 And yet be passionless—and thus will I.
 I know thy meaning.—Deeds to do!—'tis well.
 They shall be done ere thought on.—Go ye forth;
 There is a youth who calls himself my son,
 His name is—Raimond—in his eye is light
 That shows like truth—but be not ye deceived!
 Bear him in chains before us. We will sit
 To-day in judgment, and the skies shall see
 The strength which girds our nature.—Will not this
 Be glorious, brave Montalba?—Linger not,
 Ye tardy messengers! for there are things

Which ask the speed of storms.

[Exeunt Guido and others.]

Is not this well ?

MONTALBA.

'Tis noble. Keep thy spirit to this proud height,

(Aside.)

And then—be desolate like me !—my woes

Will at the thought grow light.

PROCIDA.

What now remains

To be prepared ?—There should be solemn pomp

To grace a day like this.—Aye, breaking hearts

Require a drapery to conceal their throbs

From cold inquiring eyes ; and it must be

Ample and rich, that so their gaze may not

Explore what lies beneath.

[Exit PROCIDA.]

MONTALBA.

Now this is well !

—I hate this Procida ; for he hath won

In all our councils that ascendancy

And mastery o'er bold hearts, which should have been

Mine by a thousand claims.—Had *he* the strength

Of wrongs like mine ?—No ! for that name—his country—

*He strikes—my vengeance hath a deeper fount :
But there's dark joy in this !—And fate hath barr'd
My soul from every other.*

[Exit MONTALBA.]

SCENE II.—*A Hermitage, surrounded by the Ruins of
an ancient Temple.*

CONSTANCE. ANSELMO.

CONSTANCE.

'Tis strange he comes not !—Is not this the still
And sultry hour of noon ?—He should have been
Here by the day-break.—Was there not a voice ?
—“ No ! 'tis the shrill Cicada, with glad life
Peopling these marble ruins, as it sports
Amidst them, in the sun.—Hark ! yet again ! ”
No ! no !—Forgive me, father ! that I bring
Earth's restless griefs and passions to disturb
The stillness of thy holy solitude ;
My heart is full of care.

ANSELMO.

There is no place

So hallow'd, as to be unvisited
By mortal cares. Nay, whither should we go,
With our deep griefs and passions, but to scenes
Lonely and still ; where he that made our hearts
Will speak to them in whispers ? I have known
Affliction too, my daughter.

CONSTANCE.

Hark ! his step !

I know it well—he comes—my Raimond, welcome !

VITTORIA *enters*, CONSTANCE *shrinks back on perceiving her*.

Oh heaven ! that aspect tells a fearful tale.

VITTORIA (*not observing her*).

There is a cloud of horror on my soul ;
And on thy words, Anselmo, peace doth wait,
Even as an echo, following the sweet close
Of some divine and solemn harmony :
Therefore I sought thee now. Oh ! speak to me
Of holy things, and names, in whose deep sound
Is power to bid the tempests of the heart
Sink, like a storm rebuked.

ANSELMO.

What recent grief
Darkens thy spirit thus ?

VITTORIA.

I said not grief.
We should rejoice to-day, but joy is not
That which it hath been. In the flowers which wreath
Its mantling cup there is a scent unknown,
Fraught with some strange delirium. All things now
Have changed their nature ; still, I say, rejoice !
There is a cause, Anselmo !—We are free,
Free and avenged !—Yet on my soul there hangs
A darkness, heavy as th' oppressive gloom
Of midnight phantasies.—Aye, for this, too,
There is a cause.

ANSELMO.

How say'st thou, we are free ?
There may have raged, within Palermo's walls,
Some brief wild tumult, but too well I know
They call the stranger, lord.

VITTORIA.

Who calls the *dead*
Conqueror or lord ?—Hush ! breathe it not aloud,

The wild winds must not hear it !—Yet, again,
I tell thee, we are free !

ANSELMO.

Thine eye hath look'd
On fearful deeds, for still their shadows hang
O'er its dark orb.—Speak ! I adjure thee, say,
How hath this work been wrought ?

VITTORIA.

Peace ! ask me not !

Why shouldst *thou* hear a tale to send thy blood
Back on its fount ?—We cannot wake them now !
The storm is in my soul, but *they* are all
At rest !—Aye, sweetly may the slaughter'd babe
By its dead mother sleep ; and warlike men
Who 'midst the slain have slumber'd oft before,
Making the shield their pillow, may repose
Well, now their toils are done.—Is 't not enough ?

CONSTANCE.

Merciful Heaven ! have such things been ? And yet
There is no shade come o'er the laughing sky !
—I am an outcast now.

ANSELMO.

O Thou, whose ways
Clouds mantle fearfully ; of all the blind,
But terrible, ministers that work thy wrath,

How much is *man* the fiercest !—Others know
Their limits—Yes ! the earthquakes, and the storms,
And the volcanoes !—He alone o'erleaps
The bounds of retribution !—Couldst thou gaze,
Vittoria ! with thy woman's heart and eye,
On such dread scenes unmoved ?

VITTORIA.

Was it for *me*
To stay th' avenging sword ?—No, though it pierced
My very soul !—“ Hark, hark, what thrilling shrieks
Ring through the air around me !—Can'st thou not
Bid them be hush'd ?—Oh ! look not on me thus ! ”

ANSELMO.

“ Lady ! thy thoughts lend sternness to the looks
Which are but sad ! ”—Have all then perish'd ? *all* ?
Was there no mercy ?

VITTORIA.

Mercy ! it hath been
A word forbidden as th' unhallowed names
Of evil powers.—Yet one there was who dared
To own the guilt of pity, and to aid
The victims ; but in vain.—Of him no more !
He is a traitor, and a traitor's death
Will be his meed.

CONSTANCE (*coming forward*).

Oh Heaven !—his name, his name ?

Is it—it cannot be !

VITTORIA (*starting*).

Thou here, pale girl !

I deem'd thee with the dead !—How hast thou 'scaped

The snare ?—Who saved thee, last of all thy race ?

Was it not he of whom I spake e'en now,

Raimond di Procida ?

CONSTANCE.

It is enough.

Now the storm breaks upon me, and I sink !

Must he too die ?

VITTORIA.

Is it ev'n so ?—Why then,

Live on—thou hast the arrow at thy heart !

“Fix not on me thy sad reproachful eyes,”

I mean not to betray thee. Thou may'st live !

Why should death bring thee his oblivious balms ?

He visits but the happy.—Didst thou ask

If Raimond too must die ?—It is as sure

As that his blood is on *thy* head, for thou

Didst win him to this treason.

CONSTANCE.

“ When did man
Call mercy, *treason* ?—Take my life, but save
My noble Raimond ! ”

VITTORIA.

“ Maiden ! ” he must die.
E’en now the youth before his judges stands,
And they are men who, to the voice of prayer,
Are as the rock is to the murmur’d sigh
Of summer-waves ; aye, though a father sit
On their tribunal. Bend thou not to me.
What wouldst thou ?

CONSTANCE.

Mercy !—Oh ! wert thou to plead
But with a look, e’en yet he might be saved !
If thou hast ever loved—

VITTORIA.

——If I have loved ?
It is *that* love forbids me to relent ;
I am what it hath made me.—O’er my soul
Lightning hath pass’d, and sear’d it. Could I weep,
I then might pity—but it will not be.

CONSTANCE.

Oh ! thou wilt yet relent, for woman's heart
Was formed to suffer and to melt.

VITTORIA.

Away !

Why should I pity thee ?—Thou wilt but prove
What I have known before—and yet I live !
Nature is strong, and it may all be borne—
The sick impatient yearning of the heart
For that which is not ; and the weary sense
Of the dull void, wherewith our homes have been
Circled by death ; yes, all things may be borne !
All, save remorse.—But I will *not* bow down
My spirit to that dark power :—there *was* no guilt !
Anselmo ! wherefore didst thou talk of guilt ?

ANSELMO.

Aye, thus doth sensitive conscience quicken thought,
Lending reproachful voices to a breeze,
Keen lightning to a look.

VITTORIA.

Leave me in peace !

Is 't not enough that I should have a sense
Of things thou canst not see, all wild and dark,
And of unearthly whispers, haunting me

With dread suggestions, but that *thy* cold words,
 Old man, should gall me too?—Must all conspire
 Against me?—Oh! thou beautiful spirit! wont
 To shine upon my dreams with looks of love,
 Where art *thou* vanish'd?—Was it not the thought
 Of thee which urged me to the fearful task,
 And wilt thou now forsake me?—I must seek
 The shadowy woods again, for there, perchance,
 Still may thy voice be in my twilight-paths;
 —Here I but meet despair!

[*Exit* VITTORIA.

ANSELMO (*to* CONSTANCE).

Despair not *thou*,
 My daughter!—he that purifies the heart
 With grief, will lend it strength.

CONSTANCE (*endeavouring to rouse herself*).

Did she not say
 That some one was to die?

ANSELMO.

I tell thee not
 Thy pangs are vain—for nature will have way.
 Earth must have tears; yet in a heart like thine,
 Faith may not yield its place.

CONSTANCE.

Have I not heard
Some fearful tale ?—Who said, that there should rest
Blood on my soul ?—What blood ?—I never bore
Hatred, kind father, unto aught that breathes ;
Raimond doth know it well.—Raimond !—High heaven,
It bursts upon me now !—and he must die !
For my sake—e'en for mine !

ANSELMO.

Her words were strange,
And her proud mind seem'd half to frenzy wrought—
—Perchance this may not be.

CONSTANCE.

It *must* not be.

Why do I linger here ? *(She rises to depart.)*

ANSELMO.

Where wouldst thou go ?

CONSTANCE.

To give their stern and unrelenting hearts
A victim in his stead.

ANSELMO.

Stay ! wouldst thou rush
On certain death ?

CONSTANCE.

I may not falter now,
—Is not the life of woman all bound up
In her affections?—What hath *she* to do
In this bleak world alone?—It may be well
For *man* on his triumphal course to move,
Uncumber'd by soft bonds; but *we* were born
For love and grief.

ANSELMO.

Thou fair and gentle thing,
Unused to meet a glance which doth not speak
Of tenderness or homage! how shouldst *thou*
Bear the hard aspect of unpitying men,
Or face the king of terrors?

CONSTANCE.

There is strength
Deep bedded in our hearts, of which we reck
But little, till the shafts of Heaven have pierced
Its fragile dwelling.—Must not earth be rent
Before her gems are found?—Oh! now I feel
Worthy the generous love which hath not shunn'd
To look on death for me!—My heart hath given
Birth to as deep a courage, and a faith
As high in its devotion.

[*Exit* CONSTANCE.]

ANSELMO.

She is gone !

Is it to perish ?—God of mercy ! lend
Power to my voice, that so its prayer may save
This pure and lofty creature !—I will follow—
But her young footstep and heroic heart
Will bear her to destruction faster far
Than I can track her path.

[*Exit* ANSELMO.]

SCENE III.—*Hall of a Public Building.*

PROCIDA, MONTALBA, GUIDO, and others, seated as on a
Tribunal.

PROCIDA.

The morn lower'd darkly, but the sun hath now,
With fierce and angry splendour, through the clouds
Burst forth, as if impatient to behold
This, our high triumph.—Lead the prisoner in.

(*RAIMOND is brought in fettered and guarded.*)

Why, what a bright and fearless brow is here !

—Is this man guilty?—Look on him, Montalba !

MONTALBA.

Be firm. Should justice falter at a look ?

PROCIDA.

No, thou say'st well. Her eyes are filleted,
Or should be so. Thou, that dost call thyself—
—But no ! I will not breathe a traitor's name—
Speak ! thou art arraign'd of treason.

RAIMOND.

I arraign

You, before whom I stand, of darker guilt,
In the bright face of heaven ; and your own hearts
Give echo to the charge. Your very looks
Have ta'en the stamp of crime, and seem to shrink,
With a perturb'd and haggard wildness, back
From the too-searching light.—Why, what hath wrought
This change on noble brows ?—There is a voice,
With a deep answer, rising from the blood
Your hands have coldly shed !—Ye are of those
From whom just men recoil, with curdling veins,
All thrill'd by life's abhorrent consciousness,
And sensitive feeling of a *murderer's* presence.
—Away ! come down from your tribunal-seat,
Put off your robes of state, and let your mien

Be pale and humbled ; for ye bear about you
That which repugnant earth doth sicken at,
More than the pestilence.—That I should live
To see my father shrink !

PROCIDA.

Montalba, speak !

There 's something chokes my voice—but fear me not.

MONTALBA.

If we must plead to vindicate our acts,
Be it when thou hast made thine own look clear !
Most eloquent youth ! What answer canst thou make
To this our charge of treason ?

RAIMOND.

I will plead

That cause before a mightier judgment-throne,
Where mercy is not guilt. But here, I feel
Too buoyantly the glory and the joy
Of my free spirit's whiteness ; for e'en now
Th' embodied hideousness of crime doth seem
Before me glaring out.—Why, I saw *thee*,
Thy foot upon an aged warrior's breast,
Trampling our nature's last convulsive heavings.
—And thou—*thy* sword—Oh, valiant chief !—is yet
Red from the noble stroke which pierced, at once.

A mother and the babe, whose little life
Was from her bosom drawn !—Immortal deeds
For bards to hymn !

GUIDO (*aside*).

I look upon his mien,
And waver.—Can it be ?—My boyish heart
Deem'd him so noble once !—Away, weak thoughts !
Why should I shrink, as if the guilt were *mine*,
From his proud glance ?

PROCIDA.

Oh, thou dissembler !—thou,
So skill'd to clothe with virtue's generous flush
The hollow cheek of cold hypocrisy,
That, with thy guilt made manifest, I can scarce
Believe thee guilty !—look on me, and say
Whose was the secret warning voice, that saved
De Couci with his bands, to join our foes,
And forge new fetters for th' indignant land ?
Whose was *this* treachery ? (*Shows him papers.*)
Who hath promised here,
(Belike to appease the manès of the dead,)
At midnight to unfold Palermo's gates,
And welcome in the foe ?—Who hath done this,
But thou, a tyrant's friend ?

RAIMOND.

Who hath done this ?

Father !—if I may call thee by that name—

Look, with thy piercing eye, on those whose smiles

Were masks that hid their daggers.—*There*, perchance,

May lurk what loves not light too strong. For me,

I know but this—there needs no deep research

To prove the truth—that murderers may be traitors

Ev'n to each other.

PROCIDA (*to* MONTALBA).

His unaltering cheek

Still vividly doth hold its natural hue,

And his eye quails not !—Is this innocence ?

MONTALBA.

No ! 'tis th' unshrinking hardihood of crime.

—Thou bear'st a gallant mien !—But where is she

Whom thou hast barter'd fame and life to save,

The fair Provençal maid ?—What ! know'st thou not

That this alone were guilt, to death allied ?

Was 't not our law that he who spared a foe,

(And is she not of that detested race ?)

Should thenceforth be amongst us *as* a foe ?

—Where hast thou borne her ?—speak !

RAIMOND.

That Heaven, whose eye
Burns up thy soul with its far-searching glance,
Is with her ; she is safe.

PROCIDA.

And by that word
Thy doom is seal'd.—Oh God ! that I had died
Before this bitter hour, in the full strength
And glory of my heart !

(*CONSTANCE enters, and rushes to RAIMOND.*)

CONSTANCE.

Oh ! art thou found ?
—But yet, to find thee thus !—Chains, chains for *thee* !
My brave, my noble love !—Off with these bonds ;
Let him be free as air :—for I am come
To be your victim now.

RAIMOND.

Death has no pang
More keen than this.—Oh ! wherefore art thou here ?
I could have died so calmly, deeming thee
Saved, and at peace.

CONSTANCE.

At peace !—And thou hast thought
Thus poorly of my love !—But woman's breast
Hath strength to suffer too.—Thy father sits
On this tribunal ; Raimond, which is he ?

RAIMOND.

My father !—who hath lull'd thy gentle heart
With that false hope ?—Beloved ! gaze around—
See, if thine eye can trace a father's soul
In the dark looks bent on us.

*(CONSTANCE, after earnestly examining the countenances
of the judges, falls at the feet of PROCIDA.)*

CONSTANCE.

Thou art he !

Nay, turn thou not away !—for I beheld
Thy proud lip quiver, and a watery mist
Pass o'er thy troubled eye ; and then I knew
Thou wert his father !—Spare him !—take *my* life,
In truth a worthless sacrifice for his,
But yet mine all.—Oh ! *he* hath still to run
A long bright race of glory.

RAIMOND.

Constance, peace !

I look upon thee, and my failing heart
Is as a broken reed.

CONSTANCE (*still addressing PROCIDA*).

Oh, yet relent !

If 'twas his crime to rescue *me*, behold
I come to be the atonement ! Let him live
To crown thine age with honour.—In thy heart
There 's a deep conflict ; but great nature pleads
With an o'ermastering voice, and thou wilt yield !
—Thou *art* his father !

PROCIDA (*after a pause*).

Maiden, thou 'rt deceived !

I am as calm as that dead pause of nature
Ere the full thunder bursts.—A judge is not
Father or friend. Who calls this man my son ?
—*My* son !—Aye ! thus his mother proudly smiled—
But she was noble !—Traitors stand alone,
Loosed from all ties.—Why should I trifle thus ?
—Bear her away !

RAIMOND (*starting forward*).

And whither ?

MONTALBA.

Unto death.

Why should she live when all her race have perish'd ?

CONSTANCE (*sinking into the arms of RAIMOND.*)

Raimond, farewell !—Oh ! when thy star hath risen
To its bright noon, forget not, best beloved,
I died for thee !

RAIMOND.

High heaven ! thou seest these things ;
And yet endur'st them !—Shalt thou die for me,
Purest and loveliest being ?—but our fate
May not divide us long.—Her cheek is cold—
Her deep blue eyes are closed—Should this be death !
—If thus, there yet were mercy !—Father, father !
Is thy heart human ?

PROCIDA.

Bear her hence, I say !
Why must my soul be torn ?

(ANSELMO enters, holding a crucifix.)

ANSELMO.

Now, by this sign
Of Heaven's prevailing love, ye shall not harm
One ringlet of her head.—How ! is there not
Enough of blood upon your burthen'd souls ?
Will not the visions of your midnight couch

Be wild and dark enough, but ye must heap
 Crime upon crime ?—Be ye content :—your dreams,
 Your councils, and your banquetings, will yet
 Be haunted by the voice which doth not sleep,
 E'en though this maid be spared !—Constance, look up !
 Thou shalt not die.

RAIMOND.

Oh ! death e'en now hath veil'd
 The light of her soft beauty.—Wake, my love ;
 Wake at my voice !

PROCIDA.

Anselmo, lead her hence,
 And let her live, but never meet my sight.
 —Begone !—My heart will burst.

RAIMOND.

One last embrace !
 —Again life's rose is opening on her cheek ;
 Yet must we part.—So love is crush'd on earth !
 But there are brighter worlds !—Farewell, farewell !
(He gives her to the care of ANSELMO.)

CONSTANCE *(slowly recovering)*.

There was a voice which call'd me.—Am I not
 A spirit freed from earth ?—Have I not pass'd
 The bitterness of death ?

ANSELMO.

Oh, haste away !

CONSTANCE.

Yes ! Raimond calls me.—He too is released
From his cold bondage.—We are free at last,
And all is well—Away !

(She is led out by ANSELMO.)

RAIMOND.

The pang is o'er,
And I have but to die.

MONTALBA.

Now, Procida,
Comes thy great task. Wake ! summon to thine aid
All thy deep soul's commanding energies ;
For thou—a chief among us—must pronounce
The sentence of thy son. It rests with thee.

PROCIDA.

Ha ! ha !—Men's hearts should be of softer mould
Than in the elder time.—Fathers could doom
Their children *then* with an unfaltering voice, .
And we must tremble thus !—Is it not said,
That nature grows degenerate, earth being now
So full of days ?

MONTALBA.

Rouse up thy mighty heart.

PROCIDA.

Aye, thou say'st right. There yet are souls which tower
As landmarks to mankind.—Well, what's the task?
—There is a man to be condemn'd, you say?
Is he then guilty?

ALL.

Thus we deem of him
With one accord.

PROCIDA.

And hath he nought to plead?

RAIMOND.

Nought but a soul unstain'd.

PROCIDA.

Why, that is little.

Stains on the soul are but as conscience deems them,
And conscience may be sear'd.—But, for this sentence!
—Was 't not the penalty imposed on man,
E'en from creation's dawn, that he must die?
—It was: thus making guilt a sacrifice
Unto eternal justice; and we but
Obey Heaven's mandate, when we cast dark souls
To th' elements from amongst us.—Be it so!

Such be *his* doom !—I have said. Aye, now my heart
Is girt with adamant, whose cold weight doth press
Its gaspings down.—Off ! let me breathe in freedom !
—Mountains are on my breast !

(He sinks back.)

MONTALBA.

Guards, bear the prisoner
Back to his dungeon.

RAIMOND.

Father ! oh, look up ;
Thou art my father still !

*(GUIDO leaving the Tribunal, throws himself on the neck
of RAIMOND.)*

GUIDO.

Oh ! Raimond, Raimond !
If it should be that I have wrong'd thee, say
Thou dost forgive me.

RAIMOND.

Friend of my young days,
So may all-pitying heaven !

(RAIMOND is led out.)

PROCIDA.

Whose voice was that?

Where is he?—gone?—now I may breathe once more
In the free air of heaven. Let us away.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

END OF ACT THE FOURTH.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.—*A Prison, dimly lighted.*RAIMOND *sleeping.* PROCIDA *enters.*PROCIDA (*gazing upon him earnestly*).

Can he then sleep?—Th' o'ershadowing night hath wrapt
Earth, at her stated hours—the stars have set
Their burning watch ; and all things hold their course
Of wakefulness and rest ; yet hath not sleep
Sat on mine eyelids since—but this avails not !
—And thus *he* slumbers !—“ Why this mien doth seem
As if its soul were but one lofty thought
Of an immortal destiny ! ”—his brow
Is calm as waves whereon the midnight heavens
Are imaged silently.—Wake, Raimond, wake !
Thy rest is deep.

RAIMOND (*starting up*).

My father !—Wherefore here ?

I am prepared to die, yet would I not
Fall by *thy* hand.

PROCIDA.

'Twas not for *this* I came.

RAIMOND.

Then wherefore ?—and upon thy lofty brow
Why burns the troubled flush ?

PROCIDA.

Perchance 'tis shame.

Yes ! it may well be shame !—for I have striven
With nature's feebleness, and been o'erpower'd.
—Howe'er it be, 'tis not for *thee* to gaze,
Noting it thus. Rise, let me loose thy chains.
Arise, and follow me ; but let thy step
Fall without sound on earth : I have prepared
The means for thy escape.

RAIMOND.

What ! *thou* ! the austere,
The inflexible Procida ! hast *thou* done this,
Deeming me guilty still ?

PROCIDA.

Upbraid me not !

It is even so. There have been nobler deeds
By Roman fathers done,—but I am weak.

Therefore, again I say, arise ! and haste,
For the night wanes. Thy fugitive course must be
To realms beyond the deep ; so let us part
In silence, and for ever.

RAIMOND.

Let *him* fly
Who holds no deep asylum in his breast,
Wherein to shelter from the scoffs of men !
—I can sleep calmly here.

PROCIDA.

Art thou in love
With death and infamy, that so thy choice
Is made, lost boy ! when freedom courts thy grasp ?

RAIMOND.

Father ! to set th' irrevocable seal
Upon that shame wherewith ye have branded me,
There needs but flight.—What should I bear from this,
My native land ?—A blighted name, to rise
And part me, with its dark remembrances,
For ever from the sunshine !—O'er my soul
Bright shadowings of a nobler destiny
Float in dim beauty through the gloom ; but here.
On earth, my hopes are closed.

PROCIDA.

Thy hopes are closed !

And what were they to mine ?—Thou wilt not fly !
Why, let all traitors flock to thee, and learn
How proudly guilt can talk !—Let fathers rear
Their offspring henceforth, as the free wild birds
Foster their young ; when these can mount alone,
Dissolving nature's bonds—why should it not
Be so with us ?

RAIMOND.

Oh, father !—Now I feel
What high prerogatives belong to death.
He hath a deep though voiceless eloquence,
To which I leave my cause. “ His solemn veil
Doth with mysterious beauty clothe our virtues,
And in its vast, oblivious fold, for ever
Give shelter to our faults.”—When I am gone,
The mists of passion which have dimm'd my name
Will melt like day-dreams ; and my memory then
Will be—not what it *should* have been—for I
Must pass without my fame—but yet, unstain'd
As a clear morning dew-drop. Oh ! the grave
Hath rights inviolate as a sanctuary's.
And they should be my own !

PROCIDA.

Now, by just Heaven,
I will not thus be tortured !—Were my heart
But of thy guilt or innocence assured,
I could be calm again. “ But, in this wild
Suspense,—this conflict and vicissitude
Of opposite feelings and convictions—What !
Hath it been mine to temper and to bend
All spirits to my purpose ; have I raised
With a severe and passionless energy,
From the dread mingling of their elements,
Storms which have rock’d the earth ?—And shall I now
Thus fluctuate, as a feeble reed, the scorn
And plaything of the winds ? ”—Look on me, boy !
Guilt never dared to meet these eyes, and keep
Its heart’s dark secret close.—Oh, pitying Heaven !
Speak to my soul with some dread oracle,
And tell me which is truth.

RAIMOND.

I will not plead.
I will not call th’ Omnipotent to attest
My innocence. No, father, in thy heart
I know my birthright shall be soon restored ;
Therefore I look to death, and bid thee speed
The great absolver.

PROCIDA.

Oh ! my son, my son !

We will not part in wrath !—the sternest hearts,
Within their proud and guarded fastnesses,
Hide something still, round which their tendrils cling
With a close grasp, unknown to those who dress
Their love in smiles. And such wert thou to me !
The all which taught me that my soul was cast
In nature's mould.—And I must now hold on
My desolate course alone !—Why, be it thus !
He that doth guide a nation's star, should dwell
High o'er the clouds in regal solitude,
Sufficient to himself.

RAIMOND.

Yet, on that summit,
When with her bright wings glory shadows thee,
Forget not him who coldly sleeps beneath,
Yet might have soar'd as high !

PROCIDA.

No, fear thou not !
Thou 'lt be remember'd long. The canker-worm
O' th' heart is ne'er forgotten.

RAIMOND.

“ Oh ! not thus—
I would not *thus* be thought of.”

PROCIDA.

Let me deem
Again that thou art base !—for thy bright looks,
Thy glorious mien of fearlessness and truth,
Then would not haunt me as th’ avenging powers
Follow’d the parricide.—Farewell, farewell !
I have no tears.—Oh ! thus thy mother look’d,
When, with a sad, yet half-triumphant smile,
All radiant with deep meaning, from her death-bed
She gave thee to my arms.

RAIMOND.

Now death has lost
His sting, since thou believ’st me innocent.

PROCIDA (*wildly.*)

Thou innocent !—Am I thy murderer then ?
Away ! I tell thee thou hast made my name
A scorn to men !—No ! I will *not* forgive thee ;
A traitor !—What ! the blood of Procida
Filling a traitor’s veins !—Let the earth drink it ;
Thou wouldst receive our foes !—but they shall meet

From thy perfidious lips a welcome, cold
As death can make it.—Go, prepare thy soul !

RAIMOND.

Father ! yet hear me !

PROCIDA.

No ! thou 'rt skill'd to make
E'en shame look fair.—Why should I linger thus ?

(Going to leave the prison he turns back for a moment.)

If there be aught—if aught—for which thou need'st
Forgiveness—not of me, but that dread power
From whom no heart is veil'd—delay thou not
Thy prayer :—Time hurries on.

RAIMOND.

I am prepared.

PROCIDA.

'Tis well.

[Exit PROCIDA.]

RAIMOND.

Men talk of torture !—Can they wreak
Upon the sensitive and shrinking frame,
Half the mind bears, and lives ?—My spirit feels
Bewilder'd ; on its powers this twilight gloom
Hangs like a weight of earth.—It should be morn ;

Why, then, perchance, a beam of Heaven's bright sun
Hath pierced, ere now, the grating of my dungeon,
Telling of hope and mercy !

[Exit into an inner cell.]

SCENE II.—*A Street of Palermo.*

Many CITIZENS *assembled.*

FIRST CITIZEN.

The morning breaks ; his time is almost come :
Will he be led this way ?

SECOND CITIZEN.

Aye, so 'tis said,
To die before that gate through which he purposed
The foe should enter in.

THIRD CITIZEN.

'Twas a vile plot !
And yet I would my hands were pure as his
From the deep stain of blood. Didst hear the sounds
I' th' air last night ?

SECOND CITIZEN. .

Since the great work of slaughter,

Who hath not heard them duly, at those hours
Which should be silent ?

THIRD CITIZEN.

Oh ! the fearful mingling,
The terrible mimicry of human voices,
In every sound which to the heart doth speak
Of woe and death.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Aye, there was woman's shrill
And piercing cry ; and the low feeble wail
Of dying infants ; and the half-suppress'd
Deep groan of man in his last agonies !
And now and then there swell'd upon the breeze
Strange, savage bursts of laughter, wilder far
Than all the rest.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Of our own fate, perchance,
These awful midnight wailings may be deem'd
An ominous prophecy.—Should France regain
Her power amongst us, doubt not, we shall have
Stern reckoners to account with.—Hark !

(The sound of trumpets is heard at a distance.)

SECOND CITIZEN.

'Twas but
A rushing of the breeze.

THIRD CITIZEN.

E'en now, 'tis said,
The hostile bands approach.

(The sound is heard gradually drawing nearer.)

SECOND CITIZEN.

Again!—that sound
Was no illusion. Nearer yet it swells—
They come, they come!

PROCIDA *enters*.

PROCIDA.

The foe is at your gates ;
But hearts and hands prepared shall meet his onset :
Why are ye loitering here ?

CITIZENS.

My lord, we came——

PROCIDA.

Think ye I know not wherefore?—'twas to see

A fellow-being die !—Aye, 'tis a sight
Man loves to look on, and the tenderest hearts
Recoil, and yet withdraw not, from the scene.
For *this* ye came—What ! is our nature fierce,
Or is there that in mortal agony,
From which the soul, exulting in its strength,
Doth learn immortal lessons ?—Hence, and arm !
Ere the night dews descend, ye will have seen
Enough of death ; for this must be a day
Of battle !—'Tis the hour which troubled souls
Delight in, for its rushing storms are wings
Which bear them up !—Arm, arm ! 'tis for your homes,
And all that lends them loveliness—Away !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Prison of RAIMOND.*

RAIMOND. ANSELMO.

RAIMOND.

And Constance then is safe !—Heaven bless thee, father ;
Good angels bear such comfort.

ANSELMO.

I have found

A safe asylum for thine honour'd love,
Where she may dwell until serener days,
With Saint Rosalia's gentlest daughters ; those
Whose hallow'd office is to tend the bed
Of pain and death, and soothe the parting soul
With their soft hymns : and therefore are they call'd
" Sisters of Mercy."

RAIMOND.

Oh ! that name, my Constance,
Befits thee well ! E'en in our happiest days,
There was a depth of tender pensiveness,
Far in thine eyes' dark azure, speaking ever
Of pity and mild grief.—Is she at peace ?

ANSELMO.

Alas ! what should I say,

RAIMOND.

Why did I ask ?

Knowing the deep and full devotedness
Of her young heart's affections ?—Oh ! the thought
Of my untimely fate will haunt her dreams,
Which should have been so tranquil !—And her soul,

Whose strength was but the lofty gift of love,
Ev'n unto death will sicken.

ANSELMO.

All that faith
Can yield of comfort, shall assuage her woes ;
And still whate'er betide, the light of Heaven
Rests on her gentle heart. But thou, my son !
Is thy young spirit master'd, and prepared
For nature's fearful and mysterious change ?

RAIMOND.

Aye, father ! of my brief remaining task
The least part is to die !—And yet the cup
Of life still mantled brightly to my lips,
Crown'd with that sparkling bubble, whose proud name
Is—glory !—Oh ! my soul, from boyhood's morn,
Hath nursed such mighty dreams !—It was my hope
To leave a name, whose echo, from the abyss
Of time, should rise, and float upon the winds,
Into the far hereafter : there to be
A trumpet-sound, a voice from the deep tomb,
Murmuring—Awake !—Arise !—But this is past !
Erewhile, and it had seem'd enough of shame,
To sleep *forgotten* in the dust—but now
—Oh God !—the undying record of my grave

Will be,—Here sleeps a traitor !—One, whose crime
Was—ye deem brave men might find nobler weapons
Than the cold murderer's dagger !

ANSELMO.

Oh, my son,
Suspend these troubled thoughts ! Thou wouldst not change
Thy lot for theirs, o'er whose dark dreams will hang
The avenging shadows, which the blood-stain'd soul
Doth conjure from the dead !

RAYMOND.

Thou 'rt right. I would not.
Yet 'tis a weary task to school the heart,
Ere years or griefs have tamed its fiery spirit
Into that still and passive fortitude,
Which is but learn'd from suffering.—Would the hour
To hush these passionate throbbings were at hand !

ANSELMO.

It will not be to-day, Hast thou not heard—
—But no—the rush, the trampling, and the stir
Of this great city, arming in her haste,
Pierce not these dungeon-depths.—The foe hath reach'd
Our gates, and all Palermo's youth, and all
Her warrior-men, are marshall'd, and gone forth
In that high hope which makes realities,
To the red field. Thy father leads them on.

RAIMOND (*starting up*).

They are gone forth ! my father leads them on !
All, all Palermo's youth !—No ! *one* is left,
Shut out from glory's race !—They are gone forth !
—Aye ! now the soul of battle is abroad,
It burns upon the air !—The joyous winds
Are tossing warrior-plumes, the proud white foam
Of battle's roaring billows !—On my sight
The vision bursts—it maddens ! 'tis the flash,
'The lightning-shock of lances, and the cloud
Of rushing arrows, and the broad full blaze
Of helmets in the sun !—The very steed
With his majestic rider glorying shares
The hour's stern joy, and waves his floating mane
As a triumphant banner !—Such things are
Even now—and I am here !

ANSELMO.

Alas, be calm !

To the same grave ye press,—thou that dost pine
Beneath a weight of chains, and they that rule
The fortunes of the fight.

RAIMOND.

Aye ! *Thou* canst feel
The calm thou wouldst impart, for unto thee

All men alike, the warrior and the slave,
Seem, as thou say'st, but pilgrims, pressing on
To the same bourne.—Yet call it not the same !
Their graves, who fall in this day's fight, will be
As altars to their country, visited
By fathers with their children, bearing wreaths,
And chanting hymns in honour of the dead :
Will mine be such ?

VITTORIA rushes in wildly, as if pursued.

VITTORIA.

 Anselmo ! art thou found ?
Haste, haste, or all is lost ! Perchance thy voice,
Whereby they deem Heaven speaks, thy lifted cross,
And prophet-mien, may stay the fugitives,
Or shame them back to die.

ANSELMO.

 The fugitives !
What words are these ?—the sons of Sicily
Fly not before the foe ?

VITTORIA.

 That I should say
It is too true !

ANSELMO.

And thou—thou bleedest, lady !

VITTORIA.

Peace ! heed not me, when Sicily is lost !
I stood upon the walls, and watched our bands,
As, with their ancient, royal banner spread,
Onward they march'd. The combat was begun,
The fiery impulse given, and valiant men
Had seal'd their freedom with their blood—when lo !
That false Alberti led his recreant vassals
To join th' invader's host.

RAIMOND.

His country's curse
Rest on the slave for ever !

VITTORIA.

Then distrust
E'en of their nobler leaders, and dismay,
That swift contagion, on Palermo's bands
Came like a deadly blight. They fled !—Oh shame !
E'en now they fly !—Aye, through the city gates
They rush, as if all Etna's burning streams
Pursued their winged steps !

RAIMOND.

Thou hast not named
Their chief—Di Procida—*He* doth not fly

VITTORIA.

No ! like a kingly lion in the toils,
Daring the hunters yet, he proudly strives
But all in vain ! The few that breast the storm,
With Guido and Montalba, by his side,
Fight but for graves upon the battle-field.

RAIMOND.

And I am *here* !—Shall there be power, O God !
In the roused energies of fierce despair,
To burst my heart—and not to rend my chains ?
Oh, for one moment of the thunderbolt
To set the strong man free !

VITTORIA (*after gazing upon him earnestly*).

Why, 'twere a deed
Worthy the fame and blessing of all time,
To loose thy bonds, thou son of Procida !
Thou art no traitor :—from thy kindled brow
Looks out thy lofty soul !—Arise ! go forth !
And rouse the noble heart of Sicily
Unto high deeds again. Anselmo, haste ;
Unbind him ! Let my spirit still prevail,
Ere I depart—for the strong hand of death
Is on me now.—

(*She sinks back against a pillar.*)

ANSELMO.

Oh Heaven ! the life-blood streams
Fast from thy heart—thy troubled eyes grow dim.
Who hath done this ?

VITTORIA.

Before the gates I stood,
And in the name of him, the loved and lost,
With whom I soon shall be, all vainly strove
To stay the shameful flight. Then from the foe,
Fraught with my summons to his viewless home,
Came the fleet shaft which pierced me.

ANSELMO.

Yet, oh yet,
It may not be too late. Help, help !

VITTORIA.

Away !
Bright is the hour which brings me liberty !

ATTENDANTS *enter*.

Haste, be those fetters riven !—Unbar the gates,
And set the captive free !

(*The ATTENDANTS seem to hesitate.*)

Know ye not *her*
Who should have worn your country's diadem ?

ATTENDANTS.

Oh, lady, we obey.

*(They take off RAIMOND's chains. He springs up
exultingly.)*

RAIMOND.

Is this no dream ?

—Mount, eagle ! thou art free !—Shall I then die,
Not 'midst the mockery of insulting crowds,
But on the field of banners, where the brave
Are striving for an immortality ?
—It is e'en so !—Now for bright arms of proof,
A helm, a keen-edged falchion, and e'en yet
My father may be saved !

VITTORIA.

Away, be strong !

And let thy battle-word, to rule the storm,
Be *Conradin* !

(He rushes out.)

Oh ! for one hour of life
To hear that name blent with the exulting shout
Of victory !—'twill not be !—A mightier power
Doth summon me away.

ANSELMO.

To purer worlds
Raise thy last thoughts in hope.

VITTORIA.

Yes ! *he* is there,

All glorious in his beauty !—Conradin !

Death parted us—and death shall re-unite !

—He will not stay—it is all darkness now ;

Night gathers o'er my spirit. *(She dies.)*

ANSELMO.

She is gone.

It is an awful hour which stills the heart

That beat so proudly once.—Have mercy, Heaven !

*(He kneels beside her.)**(The scene closes.)*SCENE IV.—*Before the Gates of Palermo.*SICILIANS *flying tumultuously towards the Gates.*VOICES *(without).*

Montjoy ! Montjoy ! St. Denis for Anjou !

Provençals on !

SICILIANS.

Fly, fly, or all is lost !

*RAIMOND appears in the gateway, armed, and carrying
a banner.*

RAIMOND.

Back, back, I say ! ye men of Sicily !
All is not lost ! Oh shame !—A few brave hearts
In such a cause, ere now, have set their breasts
Against the rush of thousands, and sustain'd,
And made the shock recoil.—Aye, man, free man,
Still to be call'd so, hath achieved such deeds
As Heaven and earth have marvell'd at ; and souls,
Whose spark yet slumbers with the days to come
Shall burn to hear : transmitting brightly thus
Freedom from race to race !—Back ! or prepare,
Amidst your hearths, your bowers, your very shrines,
To bleed and die in vain !—Turn, follow me !
Conradin, Conradin !—for Sicily
His spirit fights !—Remember Conradin !
(They begin to rally around him.)
Aye, this is well !—Now follow me, and charge !

*(The PROVENÇALS rush in, but are repulsed by the
SICILIANS.)*

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.—*Part of the Field of Battle.*

MONTALBA *enters wounded, and supported by RAIMOND, whose face is concealed by his helmet.*

RAIMOND.

Here rest thee, warrior.

MONTALBA.

Rest, aye, death is rest,
And such will soon be mine—But thanks to *thee*,
I shall not die a captive. Brave Sicilian !
These lips are all unused to soothing words,
Or I should bless the valour which hath won
For my last hour, the proud free solitude
Wherewith my soul would gird itself.—Thy name ?

RAIMOND.

'Twill be no music to thine ear, Montalba.
Gaze—read it thus !

(He lifts the visor of his helmet.)

MONTALBA.

Raimond di Procida !

RAIMOND.

Thou hast pursued me with a bitter hate,

But fare thee well ! Heaven's peace be with thy soul !
 I must away—One glorious effort more
 And this proud field is won !

[*Exit* RAIMOND.]

MONTALBA.

Am I thus humbled ?

How my heart sinks within me ! But 'tis death
 (And he can tame the mightiest) hath subdued
 My towering nature thus !—Yet is he welcome !
 That youth—'twas in his pride he rescued me !
 I was his deadliest foe, and thus he proved
 His fearless scorn. Ha ! ha ! but he shall fail
 To melt me into womanish feebleness.

There I still baffle him—the grave shall seal
 My lips for ever—mortal shall not hear
 Montalba say—“*forgive !*”

[*He dies.*

(*The scene closes.*)

SCENE VI.—*Another part of the Field.*

PROCIDA. GUIDO. *And other* SICILIANS.

PROCIDA.

The day is ours ; but he, the brave unknown,

Who turn'd the tide of battle ; he whose path
Was victory—who hath seen him ?

ALBERTI is brought in wounded, and fettered.

ALBERTI.

Procida !

PROCIDA.

Be silent, traitor !—Bear him from my sight
Unto your deepest dungeons.

ALBERTI.

In the grave
A nearer home awaits me.—Yet one word
Ere my voice fail—thy son—

PROCIDA.

Speak, speak !

ALBERTI.

Thy son
Knows not a thought of guilt. That trait'rous plot
Was mine alone. (*He is led away.*)

PROCIDA.

Attest it, earth and Heaven !
My son is guiltless !—Hear it, Sicily !
The blood of Procida is noble still !

—My son !—He lives, he lives !—His voice shall speak
Forgiveness to his sire !—His name shall cast
Its brightness o'er my soul !

GUIDO.

Oh, day of joy !

The brother of my heart is worthy still
The lofty name he bears.

ANSELMO enters.

PROCIDA.

Anselmo, welcome !

In a glad hour we meet, for know, my son
Is guiltless.

ANSELMO.

And victorious ! by his arm
All hath been rescued.

PROCIDA.

How ! th' unknown—

ANSELMO.

Was he !

Thy noble Raimond ! By Vittoria's hand
Freed from his bondage in that awful hour
When all was flight and terror.

PROCIDA.

Now my cup
Of joy too brightly mantles !—Let me press
My warrior to a father's heart—and die ;
For life hath nought beyond !—Why comes he not ?
Anselmo, lead me to my valiant boy !

ANSELMO.

Temper this proud delight.

PROCIDA.

What means that look ?
He hath not fallen ?

ANSELMO.

He lives.

PROCIDA.

Away, away !
Bid the wide city with triumphal pomp
Prepare to greet her victor. Let this hour
Atone for all his wrongs !—

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.—*Garden of a Convent.*

RAIMOND *is led in wounded, leaning on ATTENDANTS.*

RAIMOND.

Bear me to no dull couch, but let me die

In the bright face of nature !—Lift my helm,
That I may look on heaven.

FIRST ATTENDANT (*to* SECOND ATTENDANT.)

Lay him to rest
On this green sunny bank, and I will call
Some holy sister to his aid ; but thou
Return unto the field, for high-born men
There need the peasant's aid.

[*Exit* SECOND ATTENDANT.]

(*To* RAIMOND.) Here gentler hands
Shall tend thee, warrior ; for in these retreats
They dwell, whose vows devote them to the care
Of all that suffer. May'st thou live to bless them !

[*Exit* FIRST ATTENDANT.]

RAIMOND.

Thus have I wish'd to die !—'Twas a proud strife !
My father bless'd th' unknown who rescued him,
(Bless'd him, alas ! *because* unknown !) and Guido,
Beside me bravely struggling, call'd aloud,
“ Noble Sicilian, on ! ” Oh ! had they deem'd
'Twas I who led that rescue, they had spurn'd
Mine aid, though 'twas deliverance ; and their looks
Had fallen, like blights, upon me.—There is one,
Whose eye ne'er turn'd on mine, but its blue light
Grew softer, trembling through the dewy mist

Raised by deep tenderness !—Oh might the soul
Set in that eye, shine on me ere I perish !
Is 't not her voice ?

CONSTANCE *enters, speaking to a NUN, who turns into
another path.*

CONSTANCE.

Oh ! happy they, kind sister,
Whom thus ye tend ; for it is theirs to fall
With brave men side by side, when the roused heart
Beats proudly to the last !—There are high souls
Whose hope was such a death, and 'tis denied !

(She approaches RAIMOND.)

Young warrior, is there aught—*thou* here, my Raimond !
Thou here—and thus !—Oh ! is this joy or woe ?

RAIMOND.

Joy, be it joy, my own, my blessed love,
E'en on the grave's dim verge !—yes ! it *is* joy !
My Constance ! victors have been crown'd, ere now,
With the green shining laurel, when their brows
Wore death's own impress—and it may be thus
E'en yet, with me !—They freed me, when the foe
Had half prevail'd, and I have proudly earn'd,

With my heart's dearest blood, the meed to die
Within thine arms.

CONSTANCE.

Oh ! speak not thus—to die !
These wounds may yet be closed.
(She attempts to bind his wounds.)

Look on me, love !

Why, there is *more* than life in thy glad mien,
'Tis full of hope ! and from thy kindled eye
Breaks e'en unwonted light, whose ardent ray
Seems born to be immortal !

RAIMOND.

'Tis e'en so !

The parting soul doth gather all her fires
Around her ; all her glorious hopes, and dreams,
And burning aspirations, to illume
The shadowy dimness of th' untrodden path
Which lies before her ; and, encircled thus,
Awhile she sits in dying eyes, and thence
Sends forth her bright farewell. Thy gentle cares
Are vain, and yet I bless them.

CONSTANCE.

Say, not vain ;
The dying look not thus. We shall not part !

RAIMOND.

I have seen death ere now, and known him wear
Full many a changeful aspect.

CONSTANCE.

Oh ! but none
Radiant as thine, my warrior !—Thou wilt live !
Look round thee !—all is sunshine—is not this
A smiling world ?

RAIMOND.

Aye, gentlest love, a world
Of joyous beauty and magnificence,
Almost too fair to leave !—Yet must we tame
Our ardent hearts to this !—Oh, weep thou not !
There is no home for liberty, or love,
Beneath these festal skies !—Be not deceived ;
My way lies far beyond !—I shall be soon
That viewless thing which, with its mortal weeds
Casting off meaner passions, yet, we trust,
Forgets not how to love !

CONSTANCE.

And must this be ?
Heaven, thou art merciful !—Oh ! bid our souls
Depart together !

RAIMOND.

Constance ! there is strength

Within thy gentle heart, which hath been proved
Nobly, for me :—Arouse it once again !
Thy grief unmans me—and I fain would meet
That which approaches, as a brave man yields
With proud submission to a mightier foe.
—It is upon me now !

CONSTANCE.

I will be calm.

Let thy head rest upon my bosom, Raimond,
And I will so suppress its quick deep sobs,
They shall but rock thee to thy rest. There is
A world, (aye, let us seek it !) where no blight
Falls on the beautiful rose of youth, and there
I shall be with thee soon !

*PROCIDA and ANSELMO enter. PROCIDA on seeing
RAIMOND starts back.*

ANSELMO.

Lift up thy head,
Brave youth, exultingly ! for lo ! thine hour
Of glory comes !—Oh ! doth it come too late ?
E'en now the false Alberti hath confess'd
That guilty plot, for which thy life was doom'd
To be th' atonement.

RAIMOND.

'Tis enough ! Rejoice,
Rejoice, my Constance ! for I leave a name
O'er which thou may'st weep proudly !

(He sinks back.)

To thy breast

Fold me yet closer, for an icy dart
Hath touch'd my veins.

CONSTANCE.

And must thou leave me, Raimond ?
Alas ! thine eye grows dim—its wandering glance
Is full of dreams.

RAIMOND.

Haste, haste, and tell my father
I was no traitor !

PROCIDA *(rushing forward)*.

To that father's heart
Return, forgiving all thy wrongs, return !
Speak to me, Raimond !—Thou wert ever kind,
And brave, and gentle ! Say that all the past
Shall be forgiven ! That word from none but thee
My lips e'er ask'd.—Speak to me once, my boy,
My pride, my hope !—And is it with thee thus ?
Look on me yet !—Oh ! must this woe be borne ?

RAIMOND.

Off with this weight of chains ! it is not meet
 For a crown'd conqueror !—Hark, the trumpet's voice !
*(A sound of triumphant music is heard, gradually
 approaching.)*

Is 't not a thrilling call ?—What drowsy spell
 Benumbs me thus ?—Hence ! I am free again !
 Now swell your festal strains, the field is won !
 Sing me to glorious dreams. *(He dies.)*

ANSELMO.

The strife is past.

There fled a noble spirit !

CONSTANCE.

Hush ! he sleeps—

Disturb him not !

ANSELMO.

Alas ! this is no sleep
 From which the eye doth radiantly unclose :
 Bow down thy soul, for earthly hope is o'er !

*(The music continues approaching. GUIDO enters,
 with CITIZENS and SOLDIERS.)*

GUIDO.

The shrines are deck'd, the festive torches blaze—

Where is our brave deliverer?—We are come
To crown Palermo's victor !

ANSELMO.

Ye come late.

The voice of human praise doth send no echo
Into the world of spirits.

(The music ceases.)

PROCIDA *(after a pause)*.

Is this dust

I look on—Raimond !—'tis but sleep—a smile
On his pale cheek sits proudly. Raimond, wake !
Oh, God ! and this was his triumphant day !
My son, my injured son !

CONSTANCE *(starting)*.

Art *thou* his father ?

I know thee now.—Hence ! with thy dark stern eye,
And thy cold heart !—Thou canst not wake him now !
Away ! he will not answer but to me,
For none like me hath loved him ! He is mine !
Ye shall not rend him from me.

PROCIDA.

Oh ! he *knew*

'Thy love, poor maid !—Shrink from me now no more !
He knew *thy* heart—but who shall tell him now

The depth, th' intenseness, and the agony,
Of my suppress'd affection ?—I have learn'd
All his high worth in time—to deck his grave !
Is there not power in the strong spirit's woe
To force an answer from the viewless world
Of the departed ?—Raimond !—Speak ! forgive !
Raimond ! my victor, my deliverer, hear !
Why, what a world is this !—Truth ever bursts
On the dark soul too late : And glory crowns
Th' unconscious dead ! And an hour comes to break
The mightiest hearts !—My son ! my son ! is this
A day of triumph ?—Aye, for thee alone !
(He throws himself upon the body of RAIMOND.)

[Curtain falls.

THE END.

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